KUHLKEN, KATHERINE, Ph.D. 'Birds of a Feather Flock Together' or 'Opposites Attract'?: Characterizing the Romantic Partners of Individuals Exhibiting Borderline Personality Disorder Traits Using a Dimensional Personality Model. (2014)
Directed by Dr. Rosemery Nelson-Gray. 114 pp.

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is often characterized by "a pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 663). There has been limited research, however, to characterize the romantic partners of individuals with this diagnosis. Furthermore, the research to date has resulted in inconsistent findings and focuses exclusively on categorical diagnoses, rather than dimensional personality traits. Therefore, this study sought to characterize the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits in terms of the five factor model and determine whether these romantic partnerships support an attraction model of similarity, complementarity, or neither. It was predicted that the ideal romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher BPD traits would possess five factor traits similar to their own, while their actual romantic partners would possess largely complementary five factor traits. Questionnaires assessing BPD traits, five factor traits, and romantic relationship characteristics were administered to 70 female college undergraduates, and a measure of five factor traits to their current romantic partners. Participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits were found to desire ideal partners with higher neuroticism, and pair with actual partners with higher neuroticism and lower extraversion and agreeableness. Support was provided for the similarity model of attraction.

‘BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER’ OR ‘OPPOSITES ATTRACT’?: CHARACTERIZING THE ROMANTIC PARTNERS OF INDIVIDUALS EXHIBITING BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER TRAITS USING A DIMENSIONAL PERSONALITY MODEL

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2014

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6/2/14
Date of Acceptance by Committee

4/25/14
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by a pervasive pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships and self-image, intense and unstable affect, and marked impulsivity. The prevalence of BPD in the general population is estimated to be between 1.6 (Torgersen, 2009) and 5.9% (Grant et al., 2008); however, rates in outpatient mental health clinics (10%) and among psychiatric inpatients (20%) are much higher (Gunderson, 2011; Gunderson & Links, 2008). Furthermore, up to 10% of those who meet criteria for BPD commit suicide, a rate that is 50 times that found in the general population (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2001). Interrupted education, recurrent job losses, and broken marriages are also prevalent for these individuals. Approximately three-fourths of individuals with BPD are women (APA, 2013).

Despite the development of an empirically validated treatment for BPD, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), it remains difficult to treat, as is the case for personality disorders in general. In fact, several studies have shown that the existing psychotherapies for BPD are effective in treating some of the clinically relevant difficulties associated with this disorder; however, they seldom lead to its remission (Leichsenring**,** Leibing**,** Kruse**,** New, & Leweke, 2011). Of note, many authors have suggested that the only effective means of treating women with BPD is to use a couples approach, in which her romantic partner is involved and viewed as an ally to treatment

(e.g., Fruzetti, 2006; Hoffman, Buteau, Hooley, Fruzetti, & Bruce, 2003; Maltz, 1988). Yet, couples therapy, when one or more of the partners is suffering with a personality disorder, is often extremely challenging (Links & Stockwell, 2001; Nelsen, 1995; Oliver, Perry, & Cade, 2008). Furthermore, at present, little is known about the romantic partners of individuals with BPD, particularly in terms of attitudes and personality characteristics (Bouchard, Godbout, & Sabourin, 2009). Increased knowledge regarding the characteristics of these romantic partners may be informative for developing and/or modifying couples treatments. In fact, Nelsen (1995) suggested that understanding how the characteristics and dynamics of each partner in a relationship interact is a critical first step in developing a treatment that will effect change. Moreover, given the history of toxic relationships in which many individuals with BPD engage, greater knowledge regarding their romantic partners may also better inform the interpersonal effectiveness components of individual treatments for BPD. For these reasons, this study sought to contribute to the characterization of said romantic partners.

In addition to the abovementioned clinical motivations for characterizing the romantic partners of individuals with BPD, doing so was also anticipated to improve our theoretical understanding of this diagnosis. After all, the criteria for personality disorders are listed in order of decreasing diagnostic importance (APA, 2001) and the first two for BPD concern interpersonal relationships (frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment; a pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation). Knowledge regarding their partners has the potential, for example, to aid in our understanding of why the

romantic relationships of individuals with BPD are often volatile, yet so important to them that they evoke extreme feelings of abandonment and subsequent inappropriate behavioral efforts to avoid this abandonment (e.g., threatening, pleading).

Introduction to BPD

DSM-5 Criteria. As suggested, BPD is characterized, most markedly, by instability that pervades across multiple contexts. Specifically, individuals with BPD commonly experience instability in their interpersonal relationships, affect, and self-image. Within their interpersonal relationships, romantic or otherwise, individuals with BPD often alternate between extremes of idealizing and devaluing their partner. That is, individuals with BPD may idealize and be demanding of their partner's time and attention one moment, but soon after may devalue and feel like their partner does not care, give, or is "there" enough (APA, 2013). This devaluation is typically in response to real or anticipated separation, which often elicits fears of abandonment (APA, 2013; Gunderson, 1984). Individuals with BPD may make frantic efforts to avoid separation by engaging in impulsive actions, such as self-mutilation or suicidal behaviors (APA, 2013).

As stated, individuals with BPD also experience instability in affect; however, the affect that they experience is predominately negative and is most commonly expressed as dysphoria, irritability, anger, or anxiety (APA, 2013; Gunderson, 1984; Linehan, 1993). Individuals with BPD may also experience chronic feelings of emptiness and boredom (APA, 2013; Gunderson, 1984). Their ongoing dysphoric mood is infrequently interrupted by periods of satisfaction or well-being. The unstable self-image that

individuals with BPD commonly experience may be characterized by sudden changes in goals, values, career plans, and types of friends, among other things (APA, 2013).

Recurrent suicidal threats or behavior, self-injury (e.g., cutting), and impulsivity in areas that are potentially damaging (e.g., promiscuous sex, substance abuse) are also oftentimes seen in individuals with BPD. As stated, these self-destructive acts are typically preceded by threats of separation or rejection; however, other factors, such as feelings of increased responsibility, may also contribute. In addition, individuals with BPD may experience paranoid ideation or dissociation, although generally only during periods of extreme stress. Most often, these symptoms also occur in response to perceived abandonment (APA, 2013).

Characteristics of Relationships. As discussed, the relationships of individuals with BPD, romantic or otherwise, are generally unstable and laden with dysfunction. However, Oliver and colleagues (2008) have suggested that the level of dysfunction present in these relationships tends to increase as the intimacy of the relationship increases, making romantic relationships especially vulnerable. In his review of empirical studies that have addressed the sexual functioning of individuals diagnosed with BPD, Neeleman (2007) also concluded that they generally have significant problems regarding intimate and sexual relationships. These problems may be related to factors such as heightened sexual impulsivity, increased sexual boredom, reduced sexual satisfaction, greater preoccupation with sex, avoidance of sex, and a variety of sexual complaints by the partner diagnosed with BPD (Dulit, Fyer, Miller, Sacks, & Frances, 1993; Hull et al., 1993; Hurlbert, Apt, & White, 1992; Stone, 1985; Zanarini et al., 2003; Zubenko,

George, Soloff, & Schultz, 1987). In addition, a study conducted by Daley, Burge, and Hammen (2000) found that women exhibiting BPD symptoms tended to have significantly more romantic relationships, more relationship conflict, lower partner satisfaction, and higher rates of unplanned pregnancy and abuse by a romantic partner. Despite these findings, once in a committed relationship with one partner, women with BPD generally do not report engaging in excessive sexual activities (e.g., sexual thoughts, masturbation) or promiscuity (Bouchard, Godbout, & Sabourin, 2009).

Romantic Partners. To date, the literature examining romantic partners of individuals with BPD has focused on *DSM* diagnoses or traits related to diagnoses, and attachment style. In terms of *DSM* diagnoses or traits, research has most consistently found that the romantic partners of individuals with BPD have a high incidence of personality disorders or personality disorder traits. For example, in a study conducted by Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, and Villeneuve (2009), close to half of the men in their sample who were partnered with a woman diagnosed with BPD (35 couples) were diagnosed with a personality disorder themselves. Furthermore, certain personality disorders have been identified as the most commonly occurring in these partners – namely, antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders.

Bouchard, Sabourin, et al. (2009) found that nearly half of the men in their data driven study who were partnered with woman diagnosed with BPD met criterion C for antisocial personality disorder (APD), which specifies that they were diagnosable with conduct disorder before the age of 15. This finding may help in understanding the high incidence of intimate partner violence in couples in which the woman is diagnosed with

BPD given that the *DSM* criteria for both APD and conduct disorder include physical aggression towards others (APA, 2013).

Alternatively, Lachkar (1998) suggested that individuals with BPD tend to become romantically involved with partners who suffer from narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Other authors have also recognized this as a common pairing (Bader & Pearson, 1988; Solomon, 1985). According to Nelsen (1995), individuals with BPD and NPD share a number of common underlying problems, including neediness, low self-esteem, rage, and fears of being abandoned or controlled in close relationships. Furthermore, she suggested that, when in relationships with one another, these individuals tend to engage in the defense mechanisms of splitting (i.e., viewing others as all good or all bad) and projecting "unacceptable parts of the self" onto their partner (p.60-61). It is worth noting that each of these accounts regarding the prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder was anecdotal in nature rather than data driven.

In addition to research on the personality disorders or personality disorder traits of the romantic partners of persons diagnosed with BPD, other research has examined the attachment style of these partners, albeit limitedly. In a study by Bouchard, Sabourin, and collegues (2009), the majority of women in their sample who were diagnosed with BPD were partnered with men who exhibited high levels of rejection anxiety and intimacy avoidance. Moreover, nearly 70% of the male partners in this sample were characterized by insecure attachment. The authors speculated that a partnership of individuals who both exhibit insecure attachment styles (as is characteristic of individuals diagnosed with BPD as well) leads them to get locked into negative cycles that include fears of abandonment

and dependency, rage, devaluation, and avoidance, with low relationship quality as the result.

As is evident, the literature examining the romantic partners of individuals with BPD is not only focused exclusively on *DSM* diagnoses or traits and attachment style, but is limited in its extent. Furthermore, although a portion of the abovementioned literature is based on data collection regarding "current" couples in which one partner is diagnosed with BPD, much of it is driven by clinicians' anecdotal accounts of common partnerships encountered in their practice. Additional data driven research is needed to provide clarity regarding the characteristics of romantic partners of individuals with BPD, should a pattern exist.

Beyond merely confirming or disconfirming the findings within the current literature regarding the romantic partners of individuals with BPD, this study sought to provide a new perspective by examining these partners in terms of dimensional personality traits. Furthermore, both their ideal and actual romantic partners were considered, whereas only actual romantic partners have been examined in the past. Examining participants' ideal and actual romantic partners is common practice in the literature on attraction (e.g., Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Figueredo, Sefcek, & Jones, 2006; Zentner, 2005) and has the potential to provide insight into the method(s) by which individuals with BPD choose their romantic partners.

"Normal" Models of Personality

Examining the partners of individuals with BPD in terms of dimensional personality traits, as was done in this study, was anticipated to be useful for a number of

reasons. First and foremost, the current literature is not in agreement as to how to characterize these romantic partners. As detailed previously, some studies suggest that individuals with BPD are typically paired with partners exhibiting APD traits, while others highlight partnerships between individuals with BPD and NPD. More importantly, however, the use of categorical diagnoses is problematic, primarily due to the heterogeneity that exists in clinical presentations within diagnoses. To elaborate, for many of the diagnoses included in the *DSM*, polythetic criteria sets are used, in which only a subset of a longer list of criteria need be met for an individual to be diagnosed with a particular disorder. For example, an individual needs to meet only five out of nine criteria to be diagnosed with NPD (APA, 2013). To put it another way, two individuals diagnosed with NPD could, theoretically, present with very different symptoms. In addition, there is great comorbidity across personality disorder clusters, signifying significant overlap between the criteria assigned to distinct personality disorders (Costa & Widiger, 2002). According to many reports, the average number of personality disorders diagnosed per individual who meets criteria for at least one is often greater than four (Skodol, Rosnick, Kellman, Oldham, & Hyler, 1988; Widiger, Trull, Hurt, Clarkin, & Frances, 1987). Furthermore, to this point, the diagnosis of personality disorder, not otherwise specified (PD-NOS; captured by the diagnoses of "other specified personality disorder" and "unspecified personality disorder" in the *DSM*-5) has been assigned at a fairly high rate. Using a large clinical sample, Wilberg, Hummelen, Pedersen, and Karterud (2008) found the rate of PD-NOS to be 22% among patients diagnosed with a personality disorder. Similar rates of PD-NOS diagnosis have been proposed by other

researchers (e.g., Verheul & Widiger, 2004). This suggests that a number of individuals who present with personality disorder traits are not being captured with the existing diagnostic categories. For these reasons, simply knowing the diagnoses of the romantic partners of individuals with BPD provides us with limited information regarding their affect and behavioral tendencies. Instead, describing these partners in terms of dimensional personality traits may be more informative for the development or modification of treatment(s), both individual and couples.

Furthermore, the *DSM-5*, which was recently released, proposes an alternative dimensional-categorical model (included in areas for further study) for the diagnosis of personality disorders, including BPD. To elaborate, this model suggests that individuals diagnosed with one (or more) of six retained personality disorders (antisocial, avoidant, borderline, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, and schizotypal) will also be described in terms of level of personality functioning (i.e., 0-4, each with its own description) and pathological personality traits (e.g., negative affectivity, antagonism). In addition, this model suggests that individuals who do not meet criteria for one of the six specific types, but who exhibit personality disordered symptoms (identified as "personality disorder trait specified" (PD-TS)), also be described in terms of level of personality functioning and pathological traits, versus receiving a diagnosis of other specified personality disorder or unspecified personality disorder (*DSM*-5 revised labels for PD-NOS) (APA, 2013). Given the inclusion of this alternative dimensional model, which may be adopted in subsequent DSM editions, upcoming research would be remiss to describe the romantic partners of individuals with BPD solely in terms of categorical diagnoses.

Five Factor Model. The five factor model, which differentiates five primary domains of personality, is both well-known and well-supported by research (e.g., Digman, 1990; McCrae, 1992; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989). The five domains of personality include neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness. Neuroticism commonly refers to one's general level of emotional adjustment and instability. High neuroticism is associated with proneness to psychological distress, as well as having unrealistic ideas, difficulty managing the frustration resulting from resisting one's urges, and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Agreeableness refers to where an individual falls along a continuum of compassion to antagonism regarding interpersonal interactions. Thus, individuals who are high in agreeableness tend to be good natured, helpful, trusting, forgiving, eager to help others, and empathic. In contrast, those who are low in agreeableness tend to be cynical, suspicious, uncooperative, irritable, and sometimes even manipulative or vengeful. Extraversion, like agreeableness, is an interpersonal dimension, and can be described as one's level of participation and engagement in interpersonal interactions, need for stimulation, activity level, and ability to experience joy. Individuals high in extraversion are often gregarious, active, optimistic, and affectionate. On the other hand, individuals who are low in extraversion tend to be reticent, aloof, and independent, but not necessarily unfriendly. Conscientiousness refers to one's level of organization, motivation, and determination regarding goal-directed behavior. Accordingly, individuals high in conscientiousness are typically organized, hard working, reliable, and ambitious; while individuals low in conscientiousness tend to be unreliable, lazy, and negligent. Finally, openness, also

referred to as openness to experience, can be described as the purposeful seeking and appreciation of experiences. Individuals high in openness tend to be imaginative, curious, and willing to experience new ideas or values. Individuals low in openness often hold conventional beliefs and values and are set in their ways, so to speak. While research has shown support for each of these domains, the domain of openness remains controversial and not as well-established as the other four (Costa & Widiger, 2002; Soldz, Budman, Demby, & Merry, 1993).

Since the initial differentiation of the five primary domains, some modifications have been made to the five factor model; namely, for each of these five primary domains, six lower-level facets have been assigned. These include anxiety, angry-hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability, subsumed under neuroticism; trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness, subsumed under agreeableness; warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking, and positive emotions, subsumed under extraversion; competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation, subsumed under conscientiousness; and fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values, subsumed under openness (Widiger & Costa, 2002).

The five factor model was a good fit for this study for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the full five factor model, including the lower-level facets, has been found to distinguish well among the different personality disorders (Wiggins & Pincus, 1989). This was crucial for making predictions regarding the dimensional personality traits of the romantic partners of individuals with BPD given that a select few personality

disorders have been found to be associated with these partners. Furthermore, this model continues to receive growing support as a system of personality dimensions that may provide a useful framework for understanding personality disorders (Costa & Widiger, 2002). In fact, it was repeatedly promoted, although ultimately not chosen, for incorporation into the *DSM-5* as a means of describing individuals' personalities dimensionally (Widiger & Lowe, 2008).

Application to BPD. Several studies have examined how the five factor model relates to BPD, specifically. Among the five domains, an association of high neuroticism and low agreeableness to BPD has been well-established. Although less consistently, research has also supported the relation of low extraversion and low conscientiousness to BPD. Openness, on the other hand, has been shown to have little relation to BPD (e.g., Clarkin, Hull, Cantor, & Sanderson, 1993; Distel et al., 2009; Wilberg, Urnes, Friis, Pedersen, & Karterud, 1999). Beyond these primary domains of personality, research has identified particular lower-level facet scores that aid in differentiating BPD from other personality disorders. Within the domain of neuroticism, BPD has been shown to be related to high angry-hostility, impulsiveness, depression, anxiety, and vulnerability (Widiger, Trull, Clarkin, Sanderson, & Costa, 2002; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989); within the domain of agreeableness, low trust and compliance; and within the domain of conscientiousness, low competence (Widiger, Trull, et al.).

Application to Partner-Related Diagnoses. As discussed previously, the existing literature regarding the romantic partners of individuals with BPD has described these partners primarily in terms of *DSM* diagnoses or diagnostic traits. Therefore, in

order to make predictions regarding the dimensional personality traits of these romantic partners, it was essential to examine how the categorical diagnoses most often associated with them (antisocial personality disorder (APD) and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD)) related to the five factor model.

Soldz and collegues (1993) found that APD is related to high extraversion and low conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness; although the negative correlation found for APD and agreeableness was not statistically significant. Widiger, Trull, and collegues (2002) also suggested that APD is associated with high extraversion and low conscientiousness and agreeableness; however, they did not determine that APD is related to neuroticism. Within the domain of extraversion, APD has been associated with the facet of high excitement-seeking; within the domain of conscientiousness, low self-discipline and deliberation; and within the domain of agreeableness, low straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, and tender-mindedness (Widiger, Trull, et al.).

Soldz and collegues (1993) found that NPD is also related to high extraversion and low agreeableness; although, as with APD, the negative correlation between NPD and agreeableness was not statistically significant. In addition, they found that NPD is related to high openness. Widiger, Trull, and collegues (2002) also suggested that NPD is characterized by low agreeableness; however, they did not establish a relation between NPD and extraversion or openness. Instead, they suggested that, in addition to low agreeableness, NPD is also characterized by moderate to high conscientiousness. The relation between NPD and neuroticism is less clear. While individuals with NPD often self-report low neuroticism, they may in fact have insecurities and be vulnerable to

threats of self-esteem. Within the domain of agreeableness, NPD has been associated with the facets of low modesty, altruism, and tender-mindedness; within the domain of conscientiousness, high achievement-striving; and within the domain of neuroticism, the findings are mixed. When characterized by low neuroticism, NPD is associated with the facets of low self-consciousness, anxiety, and vulnerability; whereas, when characterized by high neuroticism, NPD is associated with the facets of high self-consciousness and angry-hostility (Widiger, Trull, et al.).

The five factor model, as applied to individuals with BPD and their partners, is revisited in the context of models of attraction.

Models of Attraction

Two prominent, competing models in the overall study of attraction are similarity and complementarity. The similarity model suggests that individuals are attracted to others whose characteristics are similar to their own. In contrast, the complementarity model suggests that individuals are attracted to others whose characteristics are different from, yet complement their own.

Furthermore, a common research strategy in the overall study of attraction is to compare and contrast one's ideal and actual romantic partners to one another, as well as oneself (e.g., Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Figueredo, Sefcek, & Jones, 2006; Zentner, 2005). Over the past several years, this strategy has been useful in answering a number of research questions regarding the general population. In many cases, these questions have regarded congruence or dissimilarity in personality, attitudes, values, et cetera, and how this relates to outcomes such as relationship satisfaction. As mentioned

previously, this study examined both the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits, whereas past studies examining individuals with BPD focused exclusively on their actual romantic partners. Examining both ideal and actual romantic partners has potential implications for the method(s) by which individuals with BPD choose their romantic partners. That is, a significant discrepancy between the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits would suggest that their selection of partners is driven in large part by factors other than a desire for similarity or complementarity to their own personality traits, such as physical proximity and attractiveness. In addition, examining both the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits could shed light on the low relationship satisfaction that is characteristic of their romantic relationships (Bouchard, Sabourin, et al., 2009; Daley et al., 2000). Research has suggested that large discrepancies between one's ideal romantic partner and their perception of their actual romantic partner are associated with relationship dissatisfaction; whereas, the opposite is true when the two are congruent (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Ruvolo & Veroff, 1997).

Similarity Model. According to the similarity model of attraction, individuals are most attracted to others who are similar to themselves in important domains (e.g., Lucas, Wendorf, & Imamoglu, 2004). The similarity model has also been referred to as positive assortative mating by some authors (e.g., Figueredo et al., 2006). Several explanations have been offered as to why individuals may engage in partner selection based on similarity. For example, Morry and Gaines (2005) suggested that individuals who are

similar to us are attractive not only because they validate our beliefs about the world, but also carry a reduced risk for conflict. It has also been suggested that greater similarity makes us feel understood and validated (Murray et al., 1996). Furthermore, a partner who shares our characteristics may make our interpersonal environment more understandable and predictable (Brim & Hoff, 1957; Pervin, 1963) and provide evidence that we are functioning logically (Byrne, 1961; Cohen, Stotland, & Wolfe, 1955).

Within the general population, the similarity model has been well-supported for a number of different characteristics, including attachment style (e.g., Klohnen & Luo, 2003), attitudes regarding politics and religion (e.g., Luo & Klohnen, 2005), physical attractiveness (e.g., White, 1980), level of education, socio-economic background, and IQ (e.g., Bouchard & McGue, 1981); however, studies focused on the personality characteristics that individuals have a desire for in a romantic partner have been few and far between (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007). Furthermore, studies looking at who individuals are actually coupled with have provided mixed support for positive assortative mating based on personality traits. Some studies have suggested that there is little support for positive assortative mating on this basis (e.g., Gonzaga, 2007; Watson, Klohnen, Casillas, Simms, Haig, & Berry, 2004), whereas others have demonstrated similarities in the personality traits of participants and their partners (e.g., Buss, 1984; McCrae et al., 2008).

Botwin and collegues (1997) examined the partner preferences ("ideal partner") of men and women who were dating or married and found that, across all four subsamples, participants preferred romantic partners who were similar to themselves in

terms of personality traits. Moreover, this preference was particularly strong for partners similar in openness and conscientiousness. Similarly, Figueredo et al. (2006) found that individuals were interested in finding romantic partners who were similar to themselves in terms of personality traits; however, they also found that individuals sought partners who were somewhat higher in conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and lower in neuroticism than themselves. Dijkstra and Barelds (2008) also found that individuals desired a romantic partner similar to themselves in personality. In line with these studies, Zentner (2005) found individuals' self-concepts and their ideal partner concepts, with regard to personality, to be moderately correlated (intraclass correlation coefficient = .5) in a sample of undergraduates.

As suggested by the aforementioned studies, in most cases, individuals appear to desire a partner ("ideal partner") who is similar to themselves in terms of dimensional personality traits; however, many of these same studies found that individuals often do not partner ("actual partner") with others who have similar personality traits. For example, Botwin and collegues (1997) found only a modest tendency for participants to partner with others who have similar personality traits, suggesting individual differences. In other words, some individuals appear to get what they desire, while others do not. The personality traits that they found to show the greatest levels of positive assortative mating were agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. Figueredo et al. (2006) found that individuals did not match their romantic partners on any personality traits, despite desiring similar partners. As an explanation, they suggested that other characteristics of value may override their desire for personality traits similar to their own when it comes to

actually selecting a romantic partner. Alternatively, other authors have explained that individuals sometimes perceive their partners as more similar to themselves than they actually are (when measured objectively) due to the satisfying interactions that they have with them (e.g., Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002). Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2007) suggested that it is only when individuals have the opportunity and take the time to get to know a potential romantic partner that they succeed in pairing with someone who has similar personality traits. Furthermore, they found that this is particularly true for the personality traits that have been shown to be related to the long-term success of a relationship – extraversion, neuroticism, and autonomy (Barelds, 2005).

Given the abovementioned mixed findings, the formula by which individuals choose their partners, particularly in terms of personality traits, may not be as straightforward as the similarity model proposes. Instead, the model may best be applied to specific personality traits and types of individuals (Zentner, 2005). To elaborate, Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) found that individuals who like their own personality desire to be partnered with someone who has similar personality traits; whereas individuals who dislike their own personality will seek out a partner with complementary personality traits. In addition, in a study of undergraduates, Zentner (2005) determined that the trait of openness was the best predictor of personality similarity between romantic partners, while neuroticism was the best predictor of personality dissimilarity. Therefore, individuals who are high on openness and low on neuroticism should typically seek partners who are similar to themselves; conversely, individuals low on openness and

high on neuroticism should typically seek partners who are complementary to themselves.

Complementarity Model. The complementarity model of attraction provides an alternative to the similarity model. According to this model, individuals are most attracted to others who complement them. In other words, "opposites attract" (e.g., Antill, 1983). Some authors have also referred to the complementarity model as negative assortative mating (e.g., Figueredo et al., 2006). It has been suggested that potential romantic partners who are complementary to ourselves are attractive because they increase the likelihood that our needs will be met (De Raad & Doddema-Winsemius, 1992). As an example, young women who are not economically self-sufficient may be attracted to older men who are economically well-established and able to be good providers (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Along the same line, according to the Reikian complementarity model, as proposed by Reik in 1957, individuals fall in love when they are dissatisfied with themselves and meet a potential romantic partner who has the traits that they desire but have been unable to attain. Thus, individuals with low self-esteem should be more likely to be attracted to others based on this model than individuals with high self-esteem. Instead, individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to engage in partner selection based on the similarity model (Mathes & Moore, 1985). Several years after Reik's proposal of this model, Mathes and Moore (1985) provided support for it using an undergraduate sample.

Additional support for the complementarity model has been scarce. Felmlee (2001) suggested that many individuals may, on occasion, feel attracted to others who are

"opposites" of themselves, but that these attractions infrequently develop into serious romantic relationships or develop into relationships that end prematurely. Dijkestra and Barelds (2008) found that, when asked about their general preferences, individuals expressed that they desired a romantic partner who was complementary; however, when asked specifically about personality traits, individuals desired a partner who was similar. The results of a study conducted by Seyfried and Hendrick (1973) suggest that the complementarity model is valid, but not for personality traits. Instead, within opposite-sex pairings, it may often be based on sex-role attitudes. In other words, one partner holds masculine sex-role attitudes, while the other holds feminine sex-role attitudes.

Hypotheses

Considering the existing literature on the romantic partners of individuals with BPD, the five factor personality model, and models of attraction as applied to the general population, predictions were made for individuals exhibiting BPD traits and their romantic partners with regard to dimensional personality traits. The first hypothesis was that participants exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would also exhibit higher scores on the personality domain of neuroticism and lower scores on the personality domains of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Furthermore, these participants were expected to exhibit higher scores on the facets of angry-hostility, impulsiveness, depression, anxiety, and vulnerability (subsumed under neuroticism), and lower scores on the facets of trust, compliance (subsumed under agreeableness), and competence (subsumed under conscientiousness). This hypothesis was not novel, but was designed to confirm previous research findings.

Given that past research focused exclusively on the actual romantic partners of individuals with BPD, any predictions regarding their ideal romantic partners were less founded and, therefore, exploratory. It has been suggested by Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) that individuals who dislike their personality will seek out a romantic partner who is complementary to themselves. Furthermore, Zentner (2005) found that individuals high on neuroticism also typically seek a romantic partner who is complementary in terms of personality. Although these qualities: low self-esteem and high neuroticism, typically characterize individuals with BPD, the overwhelming majority of studies have shown that individuals seek partners who are similar to themselves in terms of personality traits. What's more, Bouchard, Sabourin, et al. (2009) suggested that an independent, emotionally stable, and trusting – in other words, complementary – romantic partner is not necessarily desired as "ideal" by individuals with BPD. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study was that individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would desire an ideal romantic partner who was fairly similar to themselves. That is, an ideal partner was predicted to be higher in the domain of neuroticism and lower in the domains of agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Given the exploratory nature of this prediction regarding the domains of the five factor model, no predictions were made about the lower-level facets for each of them.

In order to make predictions regarding the actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits, it was necessary to consider what the literature to date has said about the partners of individuals with BPD. Past studies have not been in full agreement about the traits that characterize them; however, they have consistently

found that the incidence of personality disorder diagnoses or diagnostic traits is high – namely, antisocial (APD) and narcissistic (NPD) personality disorders. As described, according to the five factor model, APD has been characterized by high extraversion and low conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness; and NPD by high extraversion and openness, moderate to high conscientiousness, and low agreeableness. Considering the five factor traits associated with APD and NPD, the third hypothesis was that the actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would be characterized by higher extraversion and lower neuroticism and agreeableness. No predictions were made regarding the traits of conscientiousness and openness due to the lack of consistency of these traits across the aforementioned personality disorders. Regarding the facets associated with these factors, it was predicted that the actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would be characterized by lower altruism and tender-mindedness, both under the domain of agreeableness. Predictions regarding the facets associated with extraversion and neuroticism were not made, again, due to the fact that there is not consistency of these facets across APD and NPD.

Hypotheses one through three examined the particular five factor traits associated with participants, as well as their ideal and actual romantic partners; whereas, hypotheses four and five examined the degree to which participants were similar or complementary to their partners in terms of five factor traits. As detailed, the literature to date has largely supported the similarity model of attraction regarding ideal romantic partners, but some researchers have suggested that individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and low self-

esteem (typical of BPD) desire ideal partners who are less similar and perhaps even complementary. Therefore, hypothesis four was that participants, as a whole, would desire ideal romantic partners who were similar to themselves in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. However, it was also expected that participants exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits would desire ideal romantic partners who were more similar to themselves than participants exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits.

Previous research examining actual partner selection has produced less consistent findings when models of attraction are applied. Nevertheless, greater support has been found for partner selection utilizing the similarity model with regard to personality traits, including neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, particularly when individuals take the time to get to know his or her partner first. Furthermore, as with ideal partners, self-esteem has been found to impact partner selection such that individuals with lower self-esteem tend to select partners whose personalities are more complementary to their own, while individuals with higher self-esteem tend to select partners whose personalities are more similar. Taking into account this information, along with what the literature has shown about the typical romantic partners of individuals with BPD, hypothesis five was that participants exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits would actually partner with others who were similar to themselves in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness; whereas individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would actually partner with others who were complementary to

themselves in terms of neuroticism and extraversion, but similar in terms of agreeableness.

Exploratory Questions

Given the abovementioned predictions that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits would desire ideal romantic partners who were similar to themselves in personality (high neuroticism; low agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion), but actually partner with others whose personalities were largely complementary to their own (low neuroticism and agreeableness; high extraversion), this study also examined potential discrepancies in ideal and actual partner neuroticism and extraversion.

As discussed, individuals diagnosed with BPD tend to vacillate between idealizing and devaluing others with whom they have a relationship. As such, there is a greater likelihood that their report of their actual romantic partner's personality traits will be different from one given time to the next. Therefore, in addition, this study examined potential discrepancies in participants' ratings of their actual romantic partner's personality traits ("perceived actual partner") and their partner's ratings of their own personality traits ("actual partner") (neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness), which are presumed to be more stable, across levels of participant BPD traits.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 78 female college undergraduates age 18 and older who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Additionally, participants were required to have been in a current romantic relationship with a duration of at least 2 months. This information was gathered during a department-wide mass screening and individuals who met these requirements were invited to participate. Of the 838 students who participated in mass screening during the time of data collection, only 226 were eligible to participate in this study based on the abovementioned requirements. As outlined, approximately 35% of those eligible elected to participate. Despite having been in a romantic relationship for at least 2 months at the time of recruitment for the study, three participants reported that their relationships were of a shorter duration at the time of participation. Furthermore, five participants failed to complete a significant portion of the questionnaires due to a misunderstanding of the instructions and/or Qualtrics-related error(s). These participants were dropped from the sample. The remaining 70 participants ranged in age from 18 to 31 or older (ages 18-19 comprised 74% of the sample) and were primarily Caucasian (64%), African-American (14%), and Hispanic (11%). In addition, they largely identified as heterosexual (96%). The sample was restricted to females due to

the fact that the vast majority of individuals who meet criteria for BPD are female (APA,2013; Linehan, 1993).

Research has demonstrated the benefit of testing BPD hypotheses with college students (Tolpin, Gunthert, Cohen, & O'Neill, 2004; Trull, 1995, 2001; Trull, Useda, Conforti, & Doan, 1997). Trull (1995, 2001) and Trull et al. (1997) demonstrated that college students who score high on the PAI-BOR (Personality Assessment Inventory – Borderline Features Scale) possess several affective and behavioral problems that are associated with BPD. Specifically, studies have shown that using a raw score cutoff of 38 on the PAI-BOR as a guideline has resulted in the correct classification of 77.3% of nonclinical female college students assessed (Bell-Pringle, Pate, & Brown, 1997). Although level of BPD traits was viewed as continuous in this study, approximately 16% of the participants scored at or above a 38 on the PAI-BOR.

In addition to the abovementioned participants, the romantic partner of each was contacted by e-mail to complete an online questionnaire designed to assess their own dimensional personality traits. This was done in an effort to corroborate participants' ratings of their romantic partner's personality traits ("perceived actual partner") given the instability with which individuals with BPD often view others with whom they are in relationships (i.e., idealization versus devaluation). Thirty-eight partners completed the online questionnaire; however, 10 were dropped from the sample due to incorrect entry of their ID number, failure to complete a significant portion of the questionnaire, or because their partner was dropped from the participant sample. The remaining 28 partners were predominately male (96%).

Materials

Demographic form. Basic demographic information was collected and included age, ethnicity, and marital status. In addition, a question concerning the length of one's current romantic relationship was included so as to confirm that participants continued to be in a romantic relationship with a duration of at least 2 months at the time of the study. Participants' partners were asked only to provide their gender.

Wisconsin Personality Disorders Inventory – IV. The Wisconsin Personality Disorders Inventory–IV (WISPI-IV; Klein et al., 1993) is a 214-item self-report of continuous symptoms of the *DSM-IV* personality disorders. The WISPI-IV includes scales for each of the personality disorders (only that for BPD was administered). Items are self-descriptive and are rated on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from *never/not at all* to *always/extremely*.

The WISPI-IV has high internal consistency, with alphas ranging from .81 to .94 for the different scales (Barber & Morse, 1994). Two-week test-retest correlations have been found to range from .71 to .94, for the different scales, with an average of .88. In addition, the WISPI-IV has shown good discriminant validity between nonclinical controls and individuals diagnosed with specific personality disorders, including BPD (Klein et al., 1993). The WISPI-IV has also shown high concurrent validity for individual personality scales, such as the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory – I (Millon, 1982) and the Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire (Hyler et al., 1988), through significant correlations.

Personality Assessment Inventory. The Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI; Morey, 1991) is a 344-item self-report measure of adult psychopathology. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale ranging from *False* to *Very True*. Contained within the PAI are 22 non-overlapping scales, including the PAI – Borderline Features Scale (PAI-BOR), which was used in this study. The median alpha coefficients of internal consistency for normative, college, and clinical samples have been found to be .81, .82, and .86, respectively. Median test-retest reliability across these samples was .83. Bell-Pringle and colleagues (1997) have demonstrated clinical validity by differentiating BPD patients from unscreened controls with 80% accuracy using the PAI-BOR. In addition, Kurtz, Morey, and Tomarken (1993) demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity between the PAI-BOR and the MMPI Personality Disorder Scales in a nonclinical sample.

NEO Personality Inventory – 3. The NEO Personality Inventory – 3 (NEO-PI-3; McCrae & Costa, 2010) is a 240-item self-report measure of the five personality domains of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and the six lower-level facets that define each domain. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Participants were asked to complete the self-rating form (Form S), as well as modified versions for their ideal and actual romantic partners (i.e., item wording was changed from "I…" to "S/he…") to assess for the five factor traits that characterize each, from the perspective of the participants (always administered in this order). In addition, the romantic partners of participants were asked to complete this measure online to assess for their own five factor traits. This was

done in an effort to confirm the five factor trait ratings provided by participants of their actual romantic partners.

The NEO-PI-3 has high internal consistency, with alphas ranging from .89 to .93 for the five domains. The alphas for the 30 facets are somewhat lower, ranging from .54 to .83 (McCrae & Costa). Although there are no data on the retest reliability for the NEO-PI-3, estimates drawn from NEO-Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) data range from .91 to .93 for the five domains and .70 to .91 for the 30 facets (Kurtz & Parrish, 2001). Furthermore, the NEO-PI-R has shown convergent validity, as demonstrated by the fact that its facet scales are correlated with other measures of similar constructs (e.g., State-Trait Personality Inventory, Interpersonal Style Inventory), as well as good discriminant and construct validity (McCrae & Costa).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a widely used 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. Items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The RSES has demonstrated good reliability and validity across a variety of sample groups, including adolescents and adults (e.g., Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Rosenberg, 1989; Silber & Tippet, 1965).

As discussed, some previous research examining models of attraction has found that individuals who like their own personality tend to desire a romantic partner with similar personality traits, whereas the opposite is true for individuals who dislike their own personality (Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1998). This finding suggests that self-esteem may moderate partner choice with regard to personality traits. Participants in the current

study were asked to complete the RSES so that self-esteem could serve as a control variable in the relation between participant and partner factor traits (e.g., neuroticism, extraversion) should this relation be found to be complementary in nature.

Relationship Questionnaire. The Relationship Questionnaire consists of eight questions designed to provide information about participants' current and past romantic relationships (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was designed specifically for this study; however, it did not aid in testing any of the hypotheses. Instead, it was meant to provide exploratory information about the nature of romantic relationships for individuals exhibiting BPD traits.

Procedure

Questionnaires, which were completed on the online survey platform, Qualtrics, were administered by undergraduate research assistants to groups of up to five participants in classrooms or laboratory rooms. Questionnaires were administered in the following order to all participants: Demographic Form, NEO-PI-3 (self), WISPI-IV (BPD scale), NEO-PI-3 (ideal partner), Relationship Questionnaire, PAI-BOR, NEO-PI-3 (actual partner), and RSES[1]. Following completion of these questionnaires, participants were asked to provide their romantic partner's contact information (e-mail address) so that they could complete the NEO-PI-3, also on Qualtrics, regarding their own dimensional personality traits. Participants were awarded course credit for participating

[1] Due to researcher error (omitted from Qualtrics questionnaire), the RSES was not administered to all participants. Of the 70 total remaining participants, it was administered to 40 participants.

in this study, while their romantic partners were entered into a raffle for one of three gift cards for their participation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

To assess reliability of the measures administered in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each. In addition, before testing the hypotheses, the variables were assessed for normality and the appropriate transformations were made, and a latent variable was created for BPD traits. Finally, paired samples t-tests and zero-order correlations were run to establish that participants' five factor trait ratings of their actual partners ("perceived actual partner") and their partner's five factor trait ratings of themselves ("actual partner") were not significantly different, as well as determine their specific levels of agreement.

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, ranges, skewness, kurtosis, and alphas of PAI-BOR, WISPI-B, BPD factor, RSES, NEO-N, NEO-E, NEO-O, NEO-A, NEO-C, NEO-N1, NEO-N2, NEO-N3, NEO-N4, NEO-N5, NEO-N6, NEO-E1, NEO-E2, NEO-E3, NEO-E4, NEO-E5, NEO-E6, NEO-O1, NEO-O2, NEO-O3, NEO-O4, NEO-O5, NEO-O6, NEO-A1, NEO-A2, NEO-A3, NEO-A4, NEO-A5, NEO-A6, NEO-C1, NEO-C2, NEO-C3, NEO-C4, NEO-C5, and NEO-C6 (self, ideal partner, perceived actual partner, and partner-report for each NEO variable). The alphas for PAI-BOR, WISPI-B, RSES, and all of the NEO factor scores (N, E, O, A, C) fell above .8, deeming them acceptable. Furthermore, with the exception of three (E4-ideal, N4-actual,

E4-actual), the alphas for all of the NEO facet variables fell within the range previously found (.54-.83) by measure authors, McCrae and Costa (2010). Regarding skewness, five variables were positively skewed: PAI-BOR, WISPI-B, NEO-N6-self, NEO-N2-ideal, and NEO-O6-actual. The distributions of PAI-BOR, WISPI-B, NEO-N6-self and NEO-N2-ideal were normalized using a square-root transformation (sqrt(x)), while the distribution of NEO-O6-actual was transformed using a logarithmic transformation (lg10(x)). Eight variables were negatively skewed: NEO-E5-self, NEO-C4-self, NEO-E3-ideal, NEO-O3-ideal, NEO-C3-ideal, NEO-C4-ideal, NEO-O3-actual, and NEO-A6-partner. The distributions for all of these variables were normalized using a square-root transformation (sqrt(k-x)).

The BPD scales of the WISPI-IV and the PAI-BOR were entered into a principal components analysis in order to extract factors of traits of BPD. The principal components analysis resulted in one factor, referred to as "BPD factor," with an eigenvalue of 1.71, accounting for 85.56% of the variance. This factor was utilized as an indicator of BPD traits in subsequent analyses (see Figure 1 for histogram of BPD trait factor scores).

Zero-order correlations conducted between perceived actual partner five factor trait ratings and actual partner five factor trait ratings were found to be significant and positive for each of the factors (see Table 2), suggesting a substantial level of agreement between the two ratings. Additionally, paired samples t-tests (see Table 3) found no significant differences between perceived actual partner and actual partner ratings for the factors of neuroticism, $t(27) = -1.86$, $p = .074$; extraversion, $t(27) = .25$, $p = .805$;

agreeableness, t (27) = .24, p = .810; or conscientiousness, t (27) = -.36, p = .725. A paired samples t-test found a significant difference between perceived actual partner and actual partner ratings for the factor of openness, t (27) = -2.44, $p < .05$; however, no predictions were made concerning this factor. Of note, of the partners (N = 28) who completed the NEO-PI-3, seven were paired with participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits, thirteen with participants scoring in the middle one-third on these measures, and eight with participants scoring in the bottom one-third on these measures. Thus, partners of participants scoring across the spectrum of BPD traits were represented in the actual partner data. Given these findings and that the data set for perceived actual partner five factor trait ratings was complete (70 ratings), while that for actual partner five factor trait ratings was not (28 ratings), the former was used as an estimate of actual partner ratings in subsequent analyses.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis, intended to replicate previously established relations of BPD traits to five factor (high neuroticism; low extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and facet traits (high anxiety, angry-hostility, depression, impulsiveness, and vulnerability; low trust, compliance, and competence), was tested using zero-order correlations (see Table 4 for correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and factor and facets of neuroticism; see Table 5 for correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and factor and facets of extraversion; see Table 6 for correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and factor and facets of openness; see Table 7 for correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and factor and facets of

agreeableness; see Table 8 for correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and factor and facets of conscientiousness). As expected, participants' level of BPD traits was found to be significantly positively correlated with the factor of neuroticism (r = .76**)[2] and facet scores of anxiety (r = .56**), angry-hostility (r = .49**), depression (r = .72**), impulsiveness (r = .51**), and vulnerability (r = .70**), all of which are subsumed under neuroticism. Also as expected, participants' level of BPD traits was found to be significantly negatively correlated with the factor of conscientiousness (r = -.54**); facet score of competence (r = -.58**), subsumed under conscientiousness; and facet score of trust (r = -.34**), subsumed under agreeableness. Contrary to the hypothesis, the factor scores of extraversion (r = -.11, p = .379) and agreeableness (r = -.22, p = .065), as well as the facet score of compliance (r = -.19, p = .114; subsumed under agreeableness), were not significantly correlated with participants' level of BPD traits.

The second hypothesis – that individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would desire an ideal romantic partner with higher neuroticism and lower agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness than individuals exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits, was also tested using zero-order correlations. Consistent with this prediction, participants' level of BPD traits was found to be significantly positively related to their ideal partner's level of neuroticism (r = .31**); however, contrary to prediction, participants' level of BPD traits was not significantly related to their ideal partner's levels of extraversion (r = -.09, p = .457), agreeableness (r = -.21, p = .086), or conscientiousness (r = -.17, p = .162).

[2] ** = $p < .01$

The third hypothesis – that the actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would be characterized by higher extraversion and lower neuroticism, agreeableness, altruism, and tender-mindedness than the actual partners of individuals exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits, was again tested using zero-order correlations. As predicted, participants' level of BPD traits was found to be significantly negatively related to their perceived actual partner's levels of agreeableness (r = -.26*)[3] and the facet altruism (r = -.35**). However, inconsistent with the hypothesis, participants' level of BPD traits was found to be significantly positively related to their perceived actual partner's level of the factor of neuroticism (r = .46**) and significantly negatively related to their perceived actual partner's level of the factor of extraversion (r = -.24*). Additionally, participants' level of BPD traits was not found to be significantly related to their perceived actual partner's level of the facet tender-mindedness (r = -.10, *p* = .393).

The fourth hypothesis was that participants, in general, would desire ideal romantic partners similar to themselves in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, with the caveat that participants exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits would desire partners more similar than those exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits. This hypothesis was tested using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. VIF (variance inflation factor) scores were calculated in each of these regression analyses to assess for multicollinearity. All of the VIF scores fell below three, suggesting that multicollinearity was not present amongst the variables entered.

[3] * = $p < .05$

In the first hierarchical regression, examining neuroticism, participants' ratings of their own neuroticism (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 6.69, $p < .01$, and accounted for 23% of the variance in participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism (see Table 9). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores was significant (β = -.35, $p < .01$). A simple slopes analysis (see Figure 2) indicated that participants' ratings of their own neuroticism interacted with participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of their own neuroticism had a stronger positive relation with participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism when participants' BPD trait scores were lower (t (66) = 2.24, $p < .05$), as predicted. However, contrary to prediction, as participants' BPD trait scores increased (to moderate (t (66) = .88, $p = .383$) and higher (t (66) = -.49, $p = .627$) levels), the relation between participants' ratings of their own and ideal partner neuroticism became nonsignificant.

In the second hierarchical regression, examining extraversion, participants' ratings of their own extraversion (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own extraversion and participants' BPD

trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of ideal partner extraversion was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 4.58, $p < .01$, and accounted for 17% of the variance in participants' ratings of ideal partner extraversion (see Table 10). As predicted, participants' ratings of their own extraversion had a significant main effect ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$), with greater ratings of participant extraversion related to higher ratings of ideal partner extraversion, regardless of level of participant BPD traits. Participants' BPD trait scores did not have a significant main effect ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .682$). Inconsistent with the hypothesis, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own extraversion and participants' BPD trait scores was not significant ($\beta = .12$, $p = .324$).

In the third hierarchical regression, examining agreeableness, participants' ratings of their own agreeableness (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own agreeableness and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of ideal partner agreeableness was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 14.17, $p < .001$, and accounted for 39% of the variance in participants' ratings of ideal partner agreeableness (see Table 11). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own agreeableness and participants' BPD trait scores was significant ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .05$). As was expected, a simple slopes analysis (see Figure 3)

indicated that participants' ratings of their own agreeableness interacted with participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of their own agreeableness had a stronger positive relation with participants' ratings of ideal partner agreeableness when participants' BPD trait scores were lower ($t(66) = 5.95$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, as participants' BPD trait scores increased to moderate ($t(66) = 5.53$, $p < .001$) and higher ($t(66) = 2.70$, $p < .01$) levels, the strength of the relation between participants' ratings of their own and ideal partner agreeableness decreased while still remaining significant and positive.

In the fourth hierarchical regression, examining conscientiousness, participants' ratings of their own conscientiousness (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own conscientiousness and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of ideal partner conscientiousness was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, $F(3, 66) = 4.78$, $p < .01$, and accounted for 18% of the variance in participants' ratings of ideal partner conscientiousness (see Table 12). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own conscientiousness and participants' BPD trait scores was significant ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .01$). Consistent with the hypothesis, a simple slopes analysis (see Figure 4) indicated that participants' ratings of their own conscientiousness interacted with participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of their own conscientiousness had a stronger positive relation with participants'

ratings of ideal partner conscientiousness when participants' BPD trait scores were lower (t (66) = 3.04, $p < .01$). Contrary to prediction, however, as participants' BPD trait scores increased (to moderate (t (66) = 1.71, $p = .093$) and higher (t (66) = -.21, $p = .838$) levels), the relation between participants' ratings of their own and ideal partner conscientiousness became nonsignificant.[4]

Finally, the fifth hypothesis was that participants exhibiting lower levels of BPD traits would actually partner with others who were similar to themselves in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness, whereas individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits would actually partner with others who were complementary to themselves in terms of neuroticism and extraversion, but similar in terms of agreeableness. This hypothesis was also tested using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. As before, all of the VIF scores fell below three, suggesting that multicollinearity was not present amongst the variables entered.

In the first hierarchical regression, examining neuroticism, participants' ratings of their own neuroticism (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of perceived actual

[4] Self-esteem, as measured by the RSES, was intended to be entered as a control variable in regression analyses examining the relation between participants' levels of five factor traits (N, E, A, C) and their ideal romantic partner's levels of those traits. However, the current literature on models of attraction suggests a theoretical basis for doing so only if individuals desire a romantic partner (ideal) who is complementary to them. Given that no significant negative relations were found between participant and ideal partner five factor traits, complementarity was not suggested.

partner neuroticism was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 10.68, $p < .001$, and accounted for 33% of the variance in participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism (see Table 13). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores was significant (β = -.34, $p < .01$). A simple slopes analysis (see Figure 5) indicated that participants' ratings of their own neuroticism interacted with participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of their own neuroticism had a positive relation with participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism when participants' BPD trait scores were lower (t (66) = 1.30, p = .198) and a negative relation when participants' BPD trait scores were higher (t (66) = -1.44, p = .155), as predicted. However, these relations were not significant at either level of BPD trait scores.

In the second hierarchical regression, examining extraversion, participants' ratings of their own extraversion (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own extraversion and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 3.26, $p < .05$, and accounted for 13% of the variance in participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion (see Table 14). However, the main effects for participants' ratings of their own extraversion (β = .23, p = .066) and participants' BPD trait scores (β = -.21, p = .079) were not significant. Furthermore,

contrary to prediction, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own extraversion and participants' BPD trait scores was not significant (β = .10, p = .389).

In the third hierarchical regression, examining agreeableness, participants' ratings of their own agreeableness (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of their own agreeableness and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 8.53, p < .001, and accounted for 28% of the variance in participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness (see Table 15). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of their own agreeableness and participants' BPD trait scores was significant (β = -.39, p < .001). A simple slopes analysis (see Figure 6) indicated that participants' ratings of their own agreeableness interacted with participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of their own agreeableness had a stronger positive relation with participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness when participants' BPD trait scores were lower. Although the relation between participants' ratings of their own and perceived actual partner agreeableness was significant when participants' BPD trait scores were at a lower level (t (66) = 4.16, p < .001), consistent with the hypothesis, as participants' BPD trait scores increased to a higher level (t (66) = -.65, p = .517) this relation became nonsignificant. The latter was contrary to prediction.

Exploratory Analyses

In addition to the abovementioned analyses, exploratory analyses were conducted to examine potential discrepancies between the NEO five factor traits (neuroticism and extraversion) of participants' ideal and perceived actual romantic partners (both as rated by participants), as well as participants' perceived actual romantic partners (as rated by participants) and their partner's ratings of themselves (neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness), across levels of BPD traits. Both discrepancies were examined using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Of note, all of the VIF scores fell below two, suggesting that multicollinearity was not present amongst the variables entered.

In the first hierarchical regression, which examined a potential discrepancy between participants' ideal and perceived actual partner's neuroticism, participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores (created by multiplying the two) was entered into the third step of the model to determine if there was a moderating effect. When participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 26.75, $p < .01$, and accounted for 55% of the variance in participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism (see Table 16). Furthermore, the interaction between participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism and participants' BPD trait scores was significant ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$). A simple slopes analysis (see Figure 7) indicated that participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism interacted with

participants' BPD trait scores such that participants' ratings of ideal partner neuroticism had a stronger positive relation with participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism when participants' BPD trait scores were lower (t (66) = 6.87, $p < .001$). As participants' BPD trait scores increased to moderate (t (66) = 5.85, $p < .001$) and higher (t (66) = 2.70, $p < .01$) levels, the relation between participants' ratings of ideal and perceived actual partner neuroticism decreased; however, it still remained significant and positive. No significant discrepancies were found between participants' ratings of ideal and perceived actual partner neuroticism across levels of participant BPD traits.

In the second hierarchical regression, which examined a potential discrepancy between participants' ideal and perceived actual partner's extraversion, participants' ratings of ideal partner extraversion (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of the two (again, created by multiplying them) was entered into the third step of the model. When participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 66) = 17.00, $p < .01$, and accounted for 44% of the variance in participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion (see Table 17). Participants' ratings of ideal partner extraversion had a significant main effect ($\beta = .59$, $p < .001$), with greater ratings of ideal partner extraversion related to higher ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion, regardless of level of participant BPD traits. Participants' BPD trait scores did not have a significant main effect ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .076$). The interaction between participants' ratings of ideal partner extraversion and participants' BPD trait scores was also not significant ($\beta = .09$, p

= .365). Thus, no significant discrepancies were found between participants' ratings of ideal and perceived actual partner extraversion across levels of participant BPD traits.

As implied, the third, fourth, and fifth hierarchical regression analyses examined the discrepancy between participants' perceived actual romantic partners (as rated by participants) and their partner's ratings of themselves. In the third hierarchical regression, participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of the two (created by multiplying them) was entered into the third step. When participants' partner's ratings of their own neuroticism was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was not significant, F (3, 24) = 1.48, p = .244 (see Table 18). It follows that the main effects for participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism (β = .44, p = .061) and participants' BPD trait scores (β = -.01, p = .971) were not significant, nor was the interaction between the two (β = .09, p = .683). These results suggest that a significant discrepancy exists between participants' ratings of perceived actual partner neuroticism and their partner's ratings of their own neuroticism, regardless of level of participant BPD traits; however given that these variables were found to be significantly correlated outside of the context of this regression analysis, it is likely that no true discrepancies exist and that the nonsignificant relation found here would be significant with the use of a larger sample.

In the fourth hierarchical regression, participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the

interaction of the two (created by multiplying them) was entered into the third step of the model. When participants' partner's ratings of their own extraversion was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 24) = 4.98, $p < .01$, and accounted for 38% of the variance in participants' partner's ratings of their own extraversion (see Table 19). Participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion had a significant main effect ($\beta = .61$, $p < .01$), with greater participant ratings of their perceived actual partner's extraversion related to higher partner ratings of their own extraversion, regardless of level of participant BPD traits. Participants' BPD trait scores did not have a significant main effect, ($\beta = -.28$, $p = .127$). The interaction between participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion and participants' BPD trait scores was also not significant ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .322$). Thus, no significant discrepancies were found between participants' ratings of perceived actual partner extraversion and their actual partner's ratings of their own extraversion across levels of participant BPD traits.

In the fifth hierarchical regression, participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness (standardized) was entered into the first step of the model, participants' BPD trait scores was entered into the second step of the model, and the interaction of the two (created by multiplying them) was entered into the third step of the model. When participants' partner's ratings of their own agreeableness was entered as the criterion variable, the overall model was significant, F (3, 24) = 5.42, $p < .01$, and accounted for 40% of the variance in participants' partner's ratings of their own agreeableness (see Table 20). Participants' ratings of perceived actual partner

agreeableness had a significant main effect (β = .46, p < .05), with greater participant ratings of their perceived actual partner's agreeableness related to higher partner ratings of their own agreeableness, regardless of level of participant BPD traits. Participants' BPD trait scores did not have a significant main effect, (β = .26, p = .179). The interaction between participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness and participants' BPD trait scores was also not significant (β = -.37, p = .067). Thus, no significant discrepancies were found between participants' ratings of perceived actual partner agreeableness and their actual partner's ratings of their own agreeableness across levels of participant BPD traits.

Qualitative Data

Analyses were also conducted to explore the qualitative data collected in the Relationship Questionnaire. Prior to examining this data, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine if participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits significantly differed from participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits in terms of these traits (as indicated by BPD factor score). Participants scoring in the top one-third on these measures had statistically significantly higher levels of BPD traits (1.08+/-.61) than participants scoring in the bottom one-third on these measures (-1.00+/-.52), t (46) = 12.64, p < .001. Furthermore, participants scoring in the top one-third had average scores of 37.33 (out of a possible 72) and 62.17 (out of a possible 162) on the PAI-BOR and WISPI-BPD, respectively, which are individual measures of BPD traits. Participants scoring in the bottom one-third had lower average scores of 16.17 and 11.17 on the PAI-BOR and WISPI-BPD, respectively.

The majority of participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits ($N = 24$) reported desiring a romantic partner who is slightly (20.8%) or somewhat (41.7%) similar in terms of personality. None of these participants reported desiring a romantic partner who is very different in terms of personality. In addition, most of them reported having been in their current relationship for at least one year (greater than one year = 33.3%; greater than two years = 41.7%). As a group, these participants reported being between slightly and moderately satisfied with their current relationship, on average. Participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits also reported that, on average, they first started dating at age 14.58; have had 3.83 sexual partners; and have been in 4.08 romantic relationships that lasted at least two months. Furthermore, they reported meeting their current romantic partners in a variety of ways (could choose more than one), with the most common being through a mutual friend (62.5%); in high school (41.7%); by living in the same hometown, but attending different schools (20.8%); and by living near one another (20.8%). The most common reasons provided by participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits for what initially attracted them to their current romantic partner (could choose more than one) were physical attractiveness (91.7%), that he/she showed interest in her (79.2%), that he/she seemed similar to her (62.5%), that he/she lived, worked, or socialized near her (54.2%), and that he/she possessed qualities that made up for her shortcomings (41.7%). Of interest, 16.7 and 20.8% of these participants, respectively, reported that they were initially attracted to their current romantic partner because they felt lonely or felt the need to be in a relationship.

In comparison, participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits ($N = 24$) reported primarily desiring a romantic partner who is slightly different (25.0%), slightly similar (33.3%), or somewhat (25.0%) similar in terms of personality. The percentage desiring a partner who is very different in terms of personality was 4.2%. The length of these participants' current romantic relationships was more variable, with 25.0% reporting a length of six to twelve months, 12.5% reporting a length of greater than one year, and the majority (54.2%) reporting a length of greater than two years. These participants reported, on average, higher relationship satisfaction (between moderately and very satisfied). In fact, a zero-order correlation conducted between participant BPD traits (treated as a continuous variable) and relationship satisfaction was significant and negative ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$), indicating that participants with lower levels of BPD traits reported significantly higher relationship satisfaction than participants with higher levels of BPD traits. Participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits also reported that, on average, they first started dating at age 15.42; have had 3.21 sexual partners; and have been in 2.98 romantic relationships that lasted at least two months. They also reported meeting their romantic partners in a variety of ways, many of which were similar to participants scoring higher on measures of BPD. The most common of these ways included high school (54.2%), through a mutual friend (41.7%), on the internet (16.7%), and by living near one another (12.5%). The most common reasons that participants scoring lower on measures of BPD provided for what initially attracted them to their current romantic partner included physical attractiveness (83.3%), he/she showed interest in her (70.8%), he/she seemed similar to her (45.8%), level of education (37.5%),

he lived/worked/socialized near her (37.5%), religious beliefs (29.2%), and he/she possessed qualities that made up for her shortcomings (25.0%). Only 8.3% of these participants reported that they were attracted to their current romantic partner because they felt the need to be in a relationship, and none of them cited loneliness as a reason.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Previous research aimed at characterizing the romantic partners of individuals diagnosed with BPD has been extremely scarce, focused on categorical diagnoses, and primarily anecdotal in nature. Furthermore, this research has focused exclusively on the actual romantic partners of these individuals, overlooking what traits they may ideally desire in a partner, and has not examined to what degree their romantic partners possess traits similar or complementary to their own. Given these gaps in the existing literature, this study sought to characterize the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits in terms of dimensional personality traits (five factor model). In addition, it examined the degree of congruence between individuals exhibiting BPD traits and their partners with regard to these dimensional personality traits.

Participants' Five Factor Traits

In order to examine the congruence between participant and partner personality traits, first, participant traits needed to be defined. Time and again, researchers have found particular five factor traits to be linked to BPD, including high neuroticism and low agreeableness. In addition, albeit less consistently, research has found a relation between BPD and low extraversion and conscientiousness (e.g., Clarkin, Hull, Cantor, & Sanderson, 1993; Distel et al., 2009; Wilberg, Urnes, Friis, Pedersen, & Karterud, 1999). The results of the current study partially supported these previous findings. That is,

participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits endorsed having higher neuroticism and lower conscientiousness than those scoring lower on measures of BPD traits. Contrary to previous findings, significant relations between BPD traits and the factors of extraversion and agreeableness were not found in the present study.

Taking into consideration that the relation between BPD and low agreeableness has been well-established in previous research, it was somewhat surprising that this relation was not found to be significant in this study. It is likely that a small sample size contributed to this nonsignificant finding and that with a larger sample size this relation would have been significant and the effect size larger (small to medium in the current study). The finding that BPD traits was not significantly related to extraversion was less surprising given that this relation has not been found with the same consistency in previous research. In fact, no specific lower-level facets of extraversion have been identified as being associated with BPD.

In contrast, previous research has found certain lower-level facets of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness to be related to BPD. Specifically, BPD has been shown to be related to high angry-hostility, impulsiveness, depression, anxiety, and vulnerability (neuroticism) (Widiger, Trull, Clarkin, Sanderson, & Costa, 2002; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989); low trust and compliance (agreeableness); and low competence (conscientiousness) (Widiger, Trull, et al.). The results of the current study also partially supported these previous findings. That is, participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits reported higher angry-hostility, impulsiveness, depression, anxiety, and vulnerability, as well as lower trust and competence than participants scoring lower on

measures of BPD traits. A significant relation between BPD traits and the facet of compliance (subsumed under agreeableness) was not found, but was in the predicted direction (negative).

In summary, according to their self-report, participants in this study who scored higher on measures of BPD traits were characterized by higher neuroticism and lower conscientiousness, relative to participants who scored lower on measures of BPD traits. Furthermore, they were characterized by higher angry-hostility, impulsiveness, depression, anxiety, and vulnerability, in addition to lower trust and competence, all of which are lower-level facets of the factors of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

Ideal Romantic Partners

As suggested, prior research examining the characteristics of the romantic partners of individuals diagnosed with BPD has been limited. Moreover, no research to date has examined the characteristics of these individuals' ideal romantic partners. The well-known similarity model of attraction offers one means of predicting said characteristics. Given the association of high neuroticism and low agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness with BPD in previous research, it was expected in the present study that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits would desire ideal romantic partners who also possessed higher neuroticism and lower agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness than participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits. This prediction was partially supported. Participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits reported desiring an ideal romantic partner with higher neuroticism than

participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits; however, significant relations between participant BPD traits and ideal partner agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness were not found. Of note, each of these relations was in the predicted direction (negative).

Despite non-significant findings for agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness, the finding that ideal partner neuroticism was significantly positively related to participant BPD traits is important given the exploratory nature of this hypothesis, as well as the well-established relation between BPD and neuroticism. To make this finding more concrete, the average factor scores for participants' ideal partners were plotted on a NEO-PI-3 profile form[5]. The average neuroticism score for the ideal romantic partners of participants scoring in the upper one-third on measures of BPD traits fell at the lower end of the average range. In comparison, the average neuroticism score for the ideal romantic partners of participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits fell solidly in the low range.

Beyond characterizing the romantic partners of individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits, this study also examined the degree to which participants and their partners were similar or complementary in terms of five factor traits. It was expected that all participants, regardless of level of BPD traits, would desire ideal romantic partners similar to themselves in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness; however, given previous findings that individuals with high neuroticism and low self-esteem (characteristic of BPD) tend to desire ideal partners who are less

[5] The male profile form was used to plot partner scores given that 96% of the partners were male.

similar, it was also expected that participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits would desire ideal romantic partners who were more similar to themselves than participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits. This hypothesis was partially supported. Regardless of participants' level of BPD traits, participants' self-reported levels of extraversion and agreeableness were significantly positively related to their ideal partner's levels of these traits, suggesting a desire for similarity. As expected, this relation was stronger for participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits with regard to agreeableness. No significant differences were found in the strength of this relation across participant BPD traits for extraversion. That is, participants' level of extraversion did not have a stronger relation with their ideal partner's level of extraversion when participants exhibited lower levels of BPD traits. For both neuroticism and conscientiousness, the relation between participants' levels of these traits and their ideal partner's levels of these traits was significant and positive only for participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, suggesting a desire for similarity for these individuals. The relation between participants' levels of neuroticism and conscientiousness and their ideal partner's levels of these traits was not significant for participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits, suggesting neither a desire for similarity nor complementarity. As discussed, participants' BPD trait scores were significantly positively related to their own and ideal partner's levels of neuroticism, suggesting truncated neuroticism scores (i.e., little variability) for participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits and their ideal partners. It is likely that these truncated

scores contributed to the nonsignificant finding for the relation between participant and ideal partner neuroticism in participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits.

Taken together, the findings regarding participants' ideal romantic partners most notably suggest that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits desired partners with significantly higher neuroticism than participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits; however, they did not desire partners with neuroticism at a level as high as their own. To illustrate the latter, the average neuroticism score for the ideal romantic partners of participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits fell at the lower end of the average range on the NEO-PI-3 profile, whereas the average neuroticism score for the participants themselves fell at the upper end of the high range. Although their ideal partners were not significantly similar in terms of neuroticism, the fact that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits desired partners with significantly higher neuroticism than participants scoring lower on measures of these traits is supportive of the notions that individuals desire partners with similar traits because they validate their beliefs about the world (Morry and Gaines, 2005) and make them feel understood (Murray et al., 1996). After all, not only is neuroticism anecdotally considered to be an undesirable trait, but higher neuroticism has also been found to be negatively related to subjective well-being, life and work satisfaction, and relationship quality (Heller, Watson, & Hies, 2004; Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006).

Actual Romantic Partners

Generally, the similarity model of attraction has received less support when applied to individuals' actual romantic partners. Despite desiring partners who are

similar, individuals are not always found to pair with them. Furthermore, the research to-date has shown that individuals with BPD, specifically, tend to partner with others who exhibit traits of APD or NPD, which are characterized primarily by five factor traits complementary to their own (high extraversion, low neuroticism and agreeableness). Therefore, it was predicted that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits would pair with partners who were higher in extraversion, but lower in neuroticism, agreeableness, altruism (facet of agreeableness), and tender-mindedness (facet of agreeableness), than participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits. The results of the current study partially supported this prediction, but largely opposed it. Specifically, the perceived actual romantic partners of participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits were found to exhibit lower agreeableness than those of participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, as predicted. Furthermore, they also exhibited lower altruism (facet of agreeableness), as predicted. However, rather than exhibiting higher extraversion and lower neuroticism than the partners of participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, the perceived actual partners of participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits exhibited significantly lower extraversion and higher neuroticism, contrary to prediction. In addition, a significant relation between participant BPD traits and perceived actual partner tender-mindedness (facet under agreeableness) was not found.

It follows that with regard to congruence of participant and actual romantic partner traits, it was expected that participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits would actually pair with partners exhibiting five factor traits largely complementary to

their own (extraversion, neuroticism), with the exception of agreeableness which was predicted to be similar to their own. In contrast, it was expected that participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits would actually pair with partners exhibiting the abovementioned five factor traits at levels similar to their own, for past research has demonstrated more support for the similarity model than complementarity model in non-clinical samples. This hypothesis was partially supported. No significant relations between participant and perceived actual partner five factor traits (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness) were found for participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits. It is not surprising that significant negative relations between participant and perceived actual partner neuroticism and extraversion (supportive of complementarity) were not found given the previously discussed findings that the actual partners (perceived) of participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits exhibited higher neuroticism and lower extraversion than the partners of participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits. As predicted, a significant positive relation between participant and perceived actual partner agreeableness was found for participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, suggesting similarity. The relations between participant and perceived actual partner neuroticism and extraversion for participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, despite being positive, were not significant.

Overall, the results regarding actual romantic partners do not provide direct support for either the complementary or similarity models of attraction in participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits; however, the findings that partners (perceived) of these participants exhibited higher neuroticism and lower extraversion and

agreeableness than partners (perceived) of participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits provides indirect support for the latter. To elaborate, although participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits did not select partners, according to their report, with significantly similar levels of neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness to their own, they appear to have selected partners with levels of these traits that are significantly different from the partners of participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits. Furthermore, their perceived partner's levels of these traits (neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness) fall in the direction closer to their own levels of these traits, versus falling in the direction closer to those of participants who scored lower on measures of BPD traits[6]. In addition, the five factor traits found to be characteristic of the perceived actual partners of participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits (higher neuroticism, lower extraversion and agreeableness) are similar to those characteristic of individuals diagnosed with BPD.

Implications

Beyond merely characterizing the romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits, the results of this study have a number of implications, both clinical and non-clinical in nature. Collectively, they suggest that personality traits play a role in partner selection for individuals exhibiting BPD traits, particularly with regard to neuroticism. To elaborate, exploratory analyses found that although there was a greater discrepancy

[6] For example, the average neuroticism score for participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits fell in the upper end of the high range on the NEO-PI-3 profile. The average neuroticism score for their perceived actual partners fell in the upper end of the average range, while the average neuroticism score for the perceived actual partners of participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits fell significantly lower - in the upper end of the low range.

between ideal and perceived actual partner neuroticism for participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits, the relation between these ratings remained significant and positive. Given that these individuals both desire and partner with others exhibiting relatively higher neuroticism, it is implied that they may actively select for this trait.

In addition, the results provide support for the similarity model of attraction, even in individuals exhibiting higher levels of BPD traits. This is noteworthy given that the dimensional personality traits characteristic of these individuals, high neuroticism in particular, are generally considered undesirable and have been shown by previous researchers to be predictive of partner dissimilarity (Zentner, 2005). Despite traditionally having been studied in non-clinical populations, models of attraction, and more specifically the similarity model, may be applicable to clinical populations as well. It is worth noting, however, that the results of this study provided greater support for this model in participants scoring lower on measures of BPD traits, and with regard to participants' ideal partners than their actual partners, as has also been the case in previous research. Interestingly, an examination of the qualitative data collected found that, of participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits, none desired a romantic partner who was very different in terms of personality. Instead, most (62.5%) desired a romantic partner who was slightly or somewhat similar in terms of personality.

Finally, the findings that the perceived actual romantic partners of participants scoring higher on measures of BPD traits exhibited relatively higher neuroticism and lower agreeableness highlight the importance of couples therapy for these partnerships. Neuroticism has been shown to be the personality trait most predictive of couple

satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), with numerous studies supporting the negative association between these factors (e.g., Barelds, 2005; Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010). In fact, participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits in the present study reported an overall lower level of relationship satisfaction than participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits. Furthermore, neuroticism is associated with problematic reactions to stress, including ineffective problem solving and withdrawal (Conner-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). It is unlikely that the provision of interpersonal effectiveness skills to the partner with BPD, in isolation, will be sufficient to improve their romantic partnerships. Rather, these partnerships have the potential to become "toxic." In such cases where partners choose to remain in the relationship, both would likely benefit from learning greater interpersonal effectiveness skills, at a minimum.

Strengths

This study was not without its strengths. As alluded to previously, it was the first to address a number of gaps in the literature, including examining both the ideal and actual romantic partners of individuals exhibiting BPD traits, as well as doing so from a dimensional perspective. Furthermore, the data gathered within this study regarding the five factor traits of participants and their partners included both factor and lower-level facet scores. This is important due to the fact that research has found the facet scores to be essential for distinguishing between specific personality disorders (Wiggins & Pincus, 1989).

In addition, this study measured BPD traits utilizing two measures, the WISPI-IV and PAI, which allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of these traits. Last but not least, although a clinical sample was not utilized in this study, a large percentage of participants, relative to the general population, scored high on measures of BPD traits. Specifically, on the PAI-BOR, approximately 16% of the sample scored at or above a cutoff score of 38, a score found by Bell-Pringle et al. (1997) to result in the correct classification of 77.3% of nonclinical female college students assessed in their study.

Limitations

As discussed, one of the limitations of the present study was the relatively small sample size of participants and, particularly, their partners. In some cases, this likely contributed to non-significant findings. Related, another limitation of this study was that actual partner five factor trait ratings were inferred from participants' ratings of their perceived actual partners. This was done because approximately half of participants' romantic partners responded to the request to complete the questionnaire assessing these traits. Of note, however, participants' five factor trait ratings of their perceived actual partners and partners' five factor trait ratings of themselves were each significantly positively correlated.

Additionally, the current study was not able to determine that the romantic partner characteristics found are unique to the partners of individuals with BPD or BPD traits, rather than characteristic of partners with any personality disorder.

Future Directions

Future research may improve upon this study in a number of ways. First, although this study included a relatively large percentage of individuals scoring higher on measures of BPD traits, the sample was nonclinical; thus, this study should be replicated using a clinical sample. Doing so has the potential to strengthen the aforementioned clinical implications. In addition, it may be beneficial to gather further information from participants' partners, including their ratings of participants' five factor traits, in an effort to verify that participants are accurately portraying themselves. As mentioned previously, individuals with BPD tend to have an unstable self-image.

This study gathered information only about current relationship length, not stability. The latter may provide an objective means of determining relationship satisfaction. Therefore, future research should assess whether participants' current relationships have been steady or characterized by frequent splits. Additionally, given that individuals with a particular categorical diagnosis are often heterogeneous, future studies may find it useful to examine whether the romantic partners of individuals characterized by differing subtypes of BPD (e.g., Lewis, Caputi, & Grenyer, 2012) vary in terms of personality or other traits.

A notably larger percentage of participants scoring in the top one-third on measures of BPD traits than participants scoring in the bottom one-third on measures of BPD traits, in the present study, reported initially being attracted to their current romantic partner due to loneliness or feeling the need to be in a relationship. This is not surprising given our knowledge of BPD; however, future research may wish to further examine this

finding, including determining the strength of the role that these factors play in romantic attraction relative to factors such as personality. Finally, future research should consider examining partner traits beyond personality, particularly those that have implications for interpersonal functioning. While knowledge regarding partner personality traits provides one avenue for improving couples treatment specific to BPD, information regarding partner communication style and problem-solving abilities, for example, is undoubtedly important as well.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, ranges, skewness, kurtosis, and alphas of PAI-BOR, WISPI-B, BPD factor, RSES, and NEO -self, -ideal, -perceived actual, and -partner variables.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
PAI-BOR	25.90	11.19	2-58	.61 (SE=.29)	.53 (SE=.57)	.89
√PAI-BOR	4.96	1.14	1.41-7.62	-.24 (SE=.29)	.79 (SE=.57)	--
WISPI-B	33.76	27.84	0-127	1.37 (SE=.29)	1.72 (SE=.57)	.93
√WISPI-B	5.33	2.34	0-11.27	.38 (SE=.29)	-.05 (SE=.57)	--
BPD Factor	0.00	1.00	-2.31-2.57	.25 (SE=.29)	.19 (SE=.57)	--
RSES	20.68	4.87	12-30	.26 (SE=.37)	-.49 (SE=.73)	.91
NEO-N-self	99.00	23.38	23-159	-.21 (SE=.29)	.80 (SE=.57)	.93
NEO-E-self	120.73	18.42	71-159	-.29 (SE=.29)	-.004 (SE=.57)	89
NEO-O-self	119.23	18.91	78-171	.09 (SE=.29)	-.02 (SE=.57)	.89
NEO-A-self	116.72	16.10	77-168	.18 (SE=.29)	1.09 (SE=.57)	.86
NEO-C-self	118.46	21.47	59-179	-.21 (SE=.29)	.58 (SE=.57)	.93
NEO-N-ideal	67.21	20.96	5-119	-.12 (SE=.29)	.57 (SE=.57)	.93
NEO-E-ideal	122.41	15.05	84-164	.26 (SE=.29)	.45 (SE=.57)	.85
NEO-O-ideal	111.47	19.78	64-171	.28 (SE=.29)	.89 (SE=.57)	.91
NEO-A-ideal	114.92	18.19	72-172	.25 (SE=.29)	1.04 (SE=.57)	.90

NEO-C-ideal	127.50	22.83	42-183	-.48 (SE=.29)	2.04 (SE=.57)	.95
NEO-N-actual	77.56	19.79	23-123	-.33 (SE=.29)	.23 (SE=.57)	.89
NEO-E-actual	114.96	17.24	73-160	.09 (SE=.29)	-.07 (SE=.57)	.87
NEO-O-actual	103.28	18.60	56-156	.41 (SE=.29)	.95 (SE=.57)	.89
NEO-A-actual	106.98	20.99	58-170	.37 (SE=.29)	.81 (SE=.57)	.91
NEO-C-actual	113.23	25.77	45-187	.22 (SE=.29)	.63 (SE=.57)	.95
NEO-N-partner	83.74	22.72	38-117	-.26 (SE=.44)	-.77 (SE=.86)	.91
NEO-E-partner	113.79	20.46	68-150	-.19 (SE=.44)	-.21 (SE=.86)	.89
NEO-O-partner	109.79	16.13	66-136	-.77 (SE=.44)	.69 (SE=.86)	.82
NEO-A-partner	108.36	18.87	71-150	-.23 (SE=.44)	.39 (SE=.86)	.87
NEO-C-partner	117.32	25.32	74-167	.21 (SE=.44)	-.61 (SE=.86)	.94
NEO-N1-self	19.64	5.61	6-31	-.12 (SE=.29)	-.60 (SE=.57)	.80
NEO-N2-self	15.93	4.81	3-27	-.03 (SE=.29)	-.06 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-N3-self	15.96	5.68	0-31	.23 (SE=.29)	.47 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-N4-self	15.64	5.54	1-29	.05 (SE=.29)	.01 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-N5-self	17.44	4.17	7-26	-.27 (SE=.29)	-.04 (SE=.57)	.65
NEO-N6-self	14.39	4.21	6-25	.61 (SE=.29)	.05 (SE=.57)	.71
√ NEO-N6-self	3.75	.55	2.45-5.00	.25 (SE=.29)	-.17 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-E1-self	23.44	3.34	16-31	.08 (SE=.29)	-.60 (SE=.57)	.61
NEO-E2-self	19.17	4.92	7-29	-.25 (SE=.29)	-.47 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-E3-self	16.17	5.25	3-26	-.36 (SE=.29)	-.48 (SE=.57)	.81

NEO-E4-self	18.10	3.66	8-27	-.25 (SE=.29)	.29 (SE=.57)	.55
NEO-E5-self	21.40	4.42	8-29	-.65 (SE=.29)	.33 (SE=.57)	.58
√(30- NEO-E5-self)	2.83	.77	1.00-4.69	-.03 (SE=.29)	-.28 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-E6-self	22.44	4.54	9-32	-.40 (SE=.29)	.70 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-O1-self	20.57	4.85	11-32	.24 (SE=.29)	-.37 (SE=.57)	.80
NEO-O2-self	20.05	5.90	1-31	-.46 (SE=.29)	.39 (SE=.57)	.82
NEO-O3-self	22.50	4.08	15-32	.31 (SE=.29)	-.20 (SE=.57)	.71
NEO-O4-self	15.84	3.48	8-25	.04 (SE=.29)	.26 (SE=.57)	.57
NEO-O5-self	19.13	5.53	7-32	.11 (SE=.29)	-.54 (SE=.57)	.82
NEO-O6-self	21.13	4.82	8-32	.12 (SE=.29)	-.12 (SE=.57)	.79
NEO-A1-self	16.71	5.12	5-32	.17 (SE=.29)	.10 (SE=.57)	.82
NEO-A2-self	20.00	4.91	8-31	-.07 (SE=.29)	-.33 (SE=.57)	.77
NEO-A3-self	24.97	3.21	17-32	.14 (SE=.29)	-.28 (SE=.57)	.70
NEO-A4-self	14.91	4.38	4-24	-.14 (SE=.29)	-.07 (SE=.57)	.63
NEO-A5-self	18.37	4.72	9-32	.08 (SE=.29)	.01 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-A6-self	21.75	3.53	15-32	.24 (SE=.29)	-.22 (SE=.57)	.59
NEO-C1-self	20.60	3.35	14-30	.40 (SE=.29)	-.08 (SE=.57)	.57
NEO-C2-self	19.00	4.59	6-30	-.26 (SE=.29)	.15 (SE=.57)	.77
NEO-C3-self	21.91	4.05	11-32	-.05 (SE=.29)	.64 (SE=.57)	.72
NEO-C4-self	21.39	5.03	3-31	-1.21 (SE=.29)	2.50 (SE=.57)	.83
√(32-NEO-C4-self)	3.17	.76	1.00-5.39	.20 (SE=.29)	1.21 (SE=.57)	--

NEO-C5-self	18.39	5.54	3-32	-.52 (SE=.29)	.13 (SE=.57)	.86
NEO-C6-self	17.17	4.59	8-28	-.09 (SE=.29)	-.60 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-N1-ideal	11.91	4.36	0-23	-.09 (SE=.29)	.85 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-N2-ideal	12.26	5.09	1-26	.81 (SE=.29)	1.30 (SE=.57)	.80
√(NEO-N2-ideal)	3.42	.75	1.00-5.10	-.22 (SE=.29)	1.64 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-N3-ideal	10.73	4.70	0-26	.36 (SE=.29)	.97 (SE=.57)	.77
NEO-N4-ideal	10.87	3.84	0-21	.07 (SE=.29)	.90 (SE=.57)	.65
NEO-N5-ideal	12.83	3.92	3-21	.18 (SE=.29)	-.27 (SE=.57)	.67
NEO-N6-ideal	8.61	3.96	0-17	-.09 (SE=.29)	-.50 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-E1-ideal	22.77	3.61	13-31	-.04 (SE=.29)	.56 (SE=.57)	.68
NEO-E2-ideal	18.64	3.96	10-31	.23 (SE=.29)	-.06 (SE=.57)	.63
NEO-E3-ideal	19.17	4.34	7-29	-.67 (SE=.29)	.68 (SE=.57)	.72
√(30- NEO-E3-ideal)	3.22	.68	1.00-4.80	-.19 (SE=.29)	1.18 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-E4-ideal	17.59	3.10	9-25	-.38 (SE=.29)	.22 (SE=.57)	.41
NEO-E5-ideal	21.46	3.91	14-31	.28 (SE=.29)	-.38 (SE=.57)	.55
NEO-E6-ideal	22.79	3.89	16-32	.30 (SE=.29)	-.60 (SE=.57)	.74
NEO-O1-ideal	17.94	4.39	6-32	.54 (SE=.29)	1.68 (SE=.57)	.74
NEO-O2-ideal	17.86	5.22	5-30	-.34 (SE=.29)	.30 (SE=.57)	.81
NEO-O3-ideal	19.84	3.98	3-29	-.82 (SE=.29)	3.81 (SE=.57)	.70
√(30- NEO-O3-ideal)	3.12	.65	1.00-5.20	-.45 (SE=.29)	2.16 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-O4-ideal	16.70	4.14	5-25	-.45 (SE=.29)	.19 (SE=.57)	.69

NEO-O5-ideal	19.27	5.62	7-32	.07 (SE=.29)	-.28 (SE=.57)	.88
NEO-O6-ideal	19.86	4.13	5-31	-.15 (SE=.29)	1.67 (SE=.57)	.71
NEO-A1-ideal	18.09	5.00	6-32	.31 (SE=.29)	1.10 (SE=.57)	.84
NEO-A2-ideal	20.40	5.34	6-32	-.29 (SE=.29)	-.27 (SE=.57)	.83
NEO-A3-ideal	24.00	3.61	16-32	-.35 (SE=.29)	-.46 (SE=.57)	.65
NEO-A4-ideal	15.11	4.13	6-25	.02 (SE=.29)	-.27 (SE=.57)	.60
NEO-A5-ideal	16.68	4.31	8-27	.36 (SE=.29)	-.06 (SE=.57)	.67
NEO-A6-ideal	20.64	3.66	13-29	.24 (SE=.29)	-.24 (SE=.57)	.70
NEO-C1-ideal	23.89	3.97	13-31	-.25 (SE=.29)	.16 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-C2-ideal	18.16	5.57	2-31	-.43 (SE=.29)	.98 (SE=.57)	.86
NEO-C3-ideal	22.43	4.24	6-32	-.80 (SE=.29)	2.72 (SE=.57)	.78
√(33- NEO-C3-ideal)	3.18	.68	1.00-5.20	-.39 (SE=.29)	1.97 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-C4-ideal	22.94	4.14	6-31	-.93 (SE=.29)	3.00 (SE=.57)	.76
√(32- NEO-C4-ideal)	2.93	.71	1.00-5.10	-.15 (SE=.29)	.93 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-C5-ideal	21.91	5.04	7-32	-.53 (SE=.29)	-.01 (SE=.57)	.87
NEO-C6-ideal	18.17	4.81	4-27	-.57 (SE=.29)	.49 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-N1-actual	12.72	4.53	3-25	.16 (SE=.29)	.33 (SE=.57)	.69
NEO-N2-actual	14.64	5.81	3-29	.35 (SE=.29)	-.19 (SE=.57)	.83
NEO-N3-actual	13.41	5.39	0-26	.09 (SE=.29)	.01 (SE=.57)	.80
NEO-N4-actual	11.72	3.37	4-20	.38 (SE=.29)	.05 (SE=.57)	.37
NEO-N5-actual	14.71	4.18	3-23	-.39 (SE=.29)	.06 (SE=.57)	.58

NEO-N6-actual	10.35	4.28	2-23	.50 (SE=.29)	.31 (SE=.57)	.74
NEO-E1-actual	22.04	4.20	11-30	-.28 (SE=.29)	.14 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-E2-actual	17.36	5.25	5-30	-.26 (SE=.29)	.05 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-E3-actual	17.31	4.75	5-27	-.52 (SE=.29)	.34 (SE=.57)	.73
NEO-E4-actual	16.51	3.59	9-25	.08 (SE=.29)	-.34 (SE=.57)	.52
NEO-E5-actual	21.23	4.41	10-31	-.04 (SE=.29)	-.11 (SE=.57)	.60
NEO-E6-actual	20.51	4.42	11-31	.35 (SE=.29)	-.14 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-O1-actual	17.00	4.64	5-32	.26 (SE=.29)	1.72 (SE=.57)	.78
NEO-O2-actual	15.53	5.11	5-29	.15 (SE=.29)	-.11 (SE=.57)	.79
NEO-O3-actual	18.27	3.96	3-25	-1.33 (SE=.29)	4.04 (SE=.57)	.64
√(26-NEO-O3-actual)	2.69	.71	1.00-4.80	.08 (SE=.29)	1.17 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-O4-actual	15.31	4.26	3-28	.10 (SE=.29)	.70 (SE=.57)	.71
NEO-O5-actual	17.99	5.95	4-31	-.06 (SE=.29)	-.59 (SE=.57)	.87
NEO-O6-actual	19.19	4.22	11-32	.90 (SE=.29)	.61 (SE=.57)	.72
LG10(NEO-O6-actual)	1.27	.09	1.04-1.51	.32 (SE=.29)	.13 (SE=.57)	--
NEO-A1-actual	17.36	5.58	3-32	.25 (SE=.29)	.56 (SE=.57)	.87
NEO-A2-actual	18.41	5.31	9-32	.20 (SE=.29)	-.55 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-A3-actual	22.25	4.40	12-32	-.26 (SE=.29)	.01 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-A4-actual	13.92	5.24	2-25	.05 (SE=.29)	-.51 (SE=.57)	.77
NEO-A5-actual	16.33	4.88	4-27	-.17 (SE=.29)	-.07 (SE=.57)	.75
NEO-A6-actual	18.71	3.96	10-27	-.08 (SE=.29)	-.53 (SE=.57)	.74

NEO-C1-actual	21.50	4.47	10-32	-.05 (SE=.29)	.00 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-C2-actual	15.46	6.39	4-32	.45 (SE=.29)	-.26 (SE=.57)	.87
NEO-C3-actual	20.16	4.55	5-31	-.44 (SE=.29)	1.23 (SE=.57)	.76
NEO-C4-actual	21.40	5.31	6-31	-.44 (SE=.29)	.58 (SE=.57)	.84
NEO-C5-actual	18.97	5.51	5-30	.01 (SE=.29)	-.69 (SE=.57)	.83
NEO-C6-actual	15.74	5.58	2-32	.38 (SE=.29)	.69 (SE=.57)	.85
NEO-N1-partner	14.75	5.39	4-25	.07 (SE=.44)	-.55 (SE=.86)	.74
NEO-N2-partner	14.71	5.65	5-29	.88 (SE=.44)	.71 (SE=.86)	.78
NEO-N3-partner	14.50	5.83	4-24	.11 (SE=.44)	-.66 (SE=.86)	.76
NEO-N4-partner	13.95	5.50	4-27	.49 (SE=.44)	.54 (SE=.86)	.72
NEO-N5-partner	15.93	4.45	6-24	-.30 (SE=.44)	-.25 (SE=.86)	.65
NEO-N6-partner	9.89	4.37	3-19	.38 (SE=.44)	-.55 (SE=.86)	.70
NEO-E1-partner	20.86	4.97	10-28	-.73 (SE=.44)	-.50 (SE=.86)	.79
NEO-E2-partner	16.64	5.40	4-27	-.29 (SE=.44)	-.03 (SE=.86)	.74
NEO-E3-partner	17.54	4.23	10-25	-.11 (SE=.44)	-.77 (SE=.86)	.66
NEO-E4-partner	17.57	4.43	10-27	.30 (SE=.44)	-.56 (SE=.86)	.62
NEO-E5-partner	21.86	4.39	10-30	-.60 (SE=.44)	1.23 (SE=.86)	.57
NEO-E6-partner	19.32	5.24	7-29	-.50 (SE=.44)	-.03 (SE=.86)	.79
NEO-O1-partner	18.21	5.42	7-28	-.08 (SE=.44)	-.53 (SE=.86)	.78
NEO-O2-partner	15.61	5.31	3-27	-.20 (SE=.44)	.36 (SE=.86)	.76
NEO-O3-partner	19.25	4.06	11-27	-.05 (SE=.44)	-.31 (SE=.86)	.58

NEO-O4-partner	15.21	4.09	5-22	-.27 (SE=.44)	.04 (SE=.86)	.69
NEO-O5-partner	21.43	5.45	8-30	-.74 (SE=.44)	.22 (SE=.86)	.79
NEO-O6-partner	20.07	3.99	13-27	-.16 (SE=.44)	-.74 (SE=.86)	.60
NEO-A1-partner	16.04	6.05	4-24	-.76 (SE=.44)	-.47 (SE=.86)	.85
NEO-A2-partner	18.04	4.49	8-27	-.45 (SE=.44)	.23 (SE=.86)	.66
NEO-A3-partner	22.36	4.84	12-31	-.57 (SE=.44)	-.12 (SE=.86)	.78
NEO-A4-partner	13.96	4.43	2-23	-.35 (SE=.44)	.82 (SE=.86)	.62
NEO-A5-partner	18.18	6.27	6-32	.04 (SE=.44)	.05 (SE=.86)	.87
NEO-A6-partner	19.79	4.40	8-27	-1.17 (SE=.44)	1.84 (SE=.86)	.69
√(28-NEO-A6-partner)	2.77	.76	1.00-4.47	.16 (SE=.44)	1.00 (SE=.86)	--
NEO-C1-partner	21.89	3.63	16-29	.21 (SE=.44)	-1.15 (SE=.86)	.55
NEO-C2-partner	17.07	7.30	2-30	.17 (SE=.44)	-.37 (SE=.86)	.90
NEO-C3-partner	21.25	3.86	13-29	-.16 (SE=.44)	-.19 (SE=.86)	.63
NEO-C4-partner	22.14	5.12	11-29	-.69 (SE=.44)	-.43 (SE=.86)	.75
NEO-C5-partner	19.11	5.90	9-29	-.12 (SE=.44)	-1.26 (SE=.86)	.86
NEO-C6-partner	15.86	5.24	7-26	.15 (SE=.44)	-.81 (SE=.86)	.75

Note. PAI-BOR = Personality Assessment Inventory – Borderline Features Scale; WISPI-B = Wisconsin Personality Disorders Inventory-IV, Borderline Scale; BPD Factor = Latent BPD Variable; RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; NEO-N = Neuroticism; NEO-E = Extraversion; NEO-O = Openness; NEO-A = Agreeableness; NEO-C = Conscientiousness; NEO-N1 = Anxiety; NEO-N2 = Angry Hostility; NEO-N3 = Depression; NEO-N4 = Self-Consciousness; NEO-N5 = Impulsiveness; NEO-N6 = Vulnerability; NEO-E1 = Warmth; NEO-E2 = Gregariousness; NEO-E3 = Assertiveness; NEO-E4 = Activity; NEO-E5 = Excitement-Seeking; NEO-E6 = Positive Emotions; NEO-O1 = Fantasy; NEO-O2 = Aesthetics; NEO-O3 = Feelings; NEO-O4 = Actions; NEO-O5 = Ideas; NEO-O6 = Values; NEO-A1 = Trust; NEO-A2 = Straightforwardness; NEO-A3 = Altruism; NEO-A4 = Compliance; NEO-A5 = Modesty; NEO-A6 = Tender-Mindedness; NEO-C1 = Competence; NEO-C2 = Order; NEO-C3 = Dutifulness; NEO-C4 = Achievement Striving; NEO-C5 = Self-Discipline; NEO-C6 = Deliberation.

Table 2

Zero-order correlations between participants' NEO five factor trait ratings of their perceived actual romantic partner and their partner's NEO five factor trait ratings of themselves.

	NEO-N-partner	NEO-E-partner	NEO-O-partner	NEO-A-partner	NEO-C-partner
NEO-N-actual	.39*	-.07	-.08	-.27	-.25
NEO-E-actual	-.26	.56**	.10	.23	.39*
NEO-O-actual	.05	-.14	.52**	-.02	-.13
NEO-A-actual	-.20	-.07	-.08	.55**	.22
NEO-C-actual	-.01	.03	-.22	.10	.56**

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$.

Table 3

Means, standard deviations, and Cohen's d for paired-samples t-tests between perceived actual romantic partner and partner-rated NEO five factor traits.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cohen's *d*
NEO-N-actual – NEO-N-partner	-8.47	24.14	.39
NEO-E-actual – NEO-E-partner	.83	17.62	.04
NEO-O-actual – NEO-O-partner	-7.93	17.20	.45
NEO-A-actual – NEO-A-partner	.89	19.39	.04
NEO-C-actual – NEO-C-partner	-1.57	23.43	.06

Table 4

Zero-order correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and self-ratings of factor and facets of neuroticism.

	BPD Factor	NEO-N-self	NEO-N1-self	NEO-N2-self	NEO-N3-self	NEO-N4-self	NEO-N5-self	NEO-N6-self
BPD Factor	1	.76**	.56**	.49**	.72**	.54**	.51**	.71**
NEO-N-self	--	1	.82**	.77**	.84**	.78**	.59**	.86**
NEO-N1-self	--	--	1	.56**	.60**	.60**	.41**	.62**
NEO-N2-self	--	--	--	1	.52**	.41**	.53**	.63**
NEO-N3-self	--	--	--	--	1	.73**	.28*	.70**
NEO-N4-self	--	--	--	--	--	1	.21	.56**
NEO-N5-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.54**
NEO-N6-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$; NEO-N = Neuroticism; NEO-N1 = Anxiety; NEO-N2 = Angry Hostility; NEO-N3 = Depression; NEO-N4 = Self-Consciousness; NEO-N5 = Impulsiveness; NEO-N6 = Vulnerability.

Table 5

Zero-order correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and self-ratings of factor and facets of extraversion.

	BPD Factor	NEO-E-self	NEO-E1-self	NEO-E2-self	NEO-E3-self	NEO-E4-self	NEO-E5-self	NEO-E6-self
BPD Factor	1	-.11	.03	-.13	-.14	-.02	-.10	-.23
NEO-E-self	--	1	.69**	.70**	.75**	.76**	-.63**	.70**
NEO-E1-self	--	--	1	.33**	.36**	.42**	-.40**	.56**
NEO-E2-self	--	--	--	1	.45**	.39**	-.39**	.32**
NEO-E3-self	--	--	--	--	1	.64**	-.27*	.35**
NEO-E4-self	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.31**	.49**
NEO-E5-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.33**
NEO-E6-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$; NEO-E = Extraversion; NEO-E1 = Warmth; NEO-E2 = Gregariousness; NEO-E3 = Assertiveness; NEO-E4 = Activity; NEO-E5 = Excitement-Seeking; NEO-E6 = Positive Emotions.

Table 6

Zero-order correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and self-ratings of factor and facets of openness.

	BPD Factor	NEO-O-self	NEO-O1-self	NEO-O2-self	NEO-O3-self	NEO-O4-self	NEO-O5-self	NEO-O6-self
BPD Factor	1	.35**	.44**	.30*	.39**	.00	.12	.09
NEO-O-self	--	1	.64**	.80**	.59**	.49**	.75**	.60**
NEO-O1-self	--	--	1	.40**	.41**	.21	.32**	.13
NEO-O2-self	--	--	--	1	.31**	.44**	.61**	.23
NEO-O3-self	--	--	--	--	1	.01	.25*	.37**
NEO-O4-self	--	--	--	--	--	1	.19	.23
NEO-O5-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.38**
NEO-O6-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$; NEO-O = Openness; NEO-O1 = Fantasy; NEO-O2 = Aesthetics; NEO-O3 = Feelings; NEO-O4 = Actions; NEO-O5 = Ideas; NEO-O6 = Values.

Table 7

Zero-order correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and self-ratings of factor and facets of agreeableness.

	BPD Factor	NEO-A-self	NEO-A1-self	NEO-A2-self	NEO-A3-self	NEO-A4-self	NEO-A5-self	NEO-A6-self
BPD Factor	1	-.22	-.34**	-.27*	-.14	-.19	.16	-.01
NEO-A-self	--	1	.60**	.71**	.67**	.54**	.66**	.55**
NEO-A1-self	--	--	1	.17	.45**	.15	.19	.21
NEO-A2-self	--	--	--	1	.30*	.33**	.42**	.34**
NEO-A3-self	--	--	--	--	1	.13	.35**	.43**
NEO-A4-self	--	--	--	--	--	1	.25*	.09
NEO-A5-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.19
NEO-A6-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$; NEO-A = Agreeableness; NEO-A1 = Trust; NEO-A2 = Straightforwardness; NEO-A3 = Altruism; NEO-A4 = Compliance; NEO-A5 = Modesty; NEO-A6 = Tender-Mindedness.

Table 8

Zero-order correlations between participants' BPD trait scores and self-ratings of factor and facets of conscientiousness.

	BPD Factor	NEO-C-self	NEO-C1-self	NEO-C2-self	NEO-C3-self	NEO-C4-self	NEO-C5-self	NEO-C6-self
BPD Factor	1	-.54**	-.58**	-.34**	-.43**	.45**	-.45**	-.37**
NEO-C-self	--	1	.81**	.72**	.81**	-.87**	.86**	.68**
NEO-C1-self	--	--	1	.48**	.61**	-.73**	.63**	.55**
NEO-C2-self	--	--	--	1	.57**	-.49**	.53**	.39**
NEO-C3-self	--	--	--	--	1	-.73**	.60**	.40**
NEO-C4-self	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.75**	-.42**
NEO-C5-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.48**
NEO-C6-self	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

Note. ** = $p < .01$; NEO-C = Conscientiousness; NEO-C1 = Competence; NEO-C2 = Order; NEO-C3 = Dutifulness; NEO-C4 = Achievement Striving; NEO-C5 = Self-Discipline; NEO-C6 = Deliberation.

Table 9

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting ideal partner neuroticism.

	Ideal Partner Neuroticism				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.108				.12
Participant Neuroticism		3.06	.15	2.38	
Step 2	.009				.01
BPD Traits		4.23	.20	2.36	
Step 3	.116				.13
Participant Neuroticism * BPD Traits		-5.03	-.35**	1.02	
Total R^2	.233				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 10

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting ideal partner extraversion.

	Ideal Partner Extraversion				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.157				.19
Participant Extraversion		5.40	.36**	1.10	
Step 2	.003				.00
BPD Traits		-.70	-.05	1.01	
Step 3	.012				.01
Participant Extraversion * BPD Traits		1.38	.12	1.09	
Total R^2	.172				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 11

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting ideal partner agreeableness.

	Ideal Partner Agreeableness				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.335				.50
Participant Agreeableness		9.92	.55**	1.06	
Step 2	.006				.01
BPD Traits		-1.02	-.06	1.07	
Step 3	.051				.05
Participant Agreeableness * BPD Traits		-3.46	-.23*	1.02	
Total R^2	.392				

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$.

Table 12

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting ideal partner conscientiousness.

	Ideal Partner Conscientiousness				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.058				.06
Participant Conscientiousness		5.18	.23	1.42	
Step 2	.002				.00
BPD Traits		-1.83	-.08	1.43	
Step 3	.119				.14
Participant Conscientiousness * BPD Traits		-5.90	-.35**	1.01	
Total R^2	.179				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 13

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived actual partner neuroticism.

	Perceived Actual Partner Neuroticism				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.138				.16
Participant Neuroticism		-.50	-.03	2.38	
Step 2	.078				.08
BPD Traits		9.60	.49**	2.36	
Step 3	.111				.12
Participant Neuroticism * BPD Traits		-4.64	-.34**	1.02	
Total R^2	.327				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 14

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived actual partner extraversion.

	Perceived Actual Partner Extraversion				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.076				.08
Participant Extraversion		3.88	.23	1.10	
Step 2	.043				.04
BPD Traits		-3.55	-.21	1.01	
Step 3	.010				.01
Participant Extraversion * BPD Traits		1.41	.10	1.09	
Total R^2	.129				

Table 15

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived actual partner agreeableness.

	Perceived Actual Partner Agreeableness				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.092				.10
Participant Agreeableness		4.89	.23*	1.06	
Step 2	.052				.05
BPD Traits		-3.25	-.16	1.07	
Step 3	.143				.17
Participant Agreeableness * BPD Traits		-6.85	-.39**	1.02	
Total R^2	.247				

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$.

Table 16

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived actual partner neuroticism.

	Perceived Actual Partner Neuroticism				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.432				.76
Ideal Partner Neuroticism		10.30	.52**	1.16	
Step 2	.075				.08
BPD Traits		4.88	.25**	1.15	
Step 3	.042				.04
Ideal Partner Neuroticism * BPD Traits		-3.54	-.22*	1.13	
Total R^2	.549				

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$.

Table 17

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived actual partner extraversion.

	Perceived Actual Partner Extraversion				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.397				.66
Ideal Partner Extraversion		10.17	.59**	1.09	
Step 2	.032				.03
BPD Traits		-2.91	-.17	1.03	
Step 3	.007				.01
Ideal Partner Extraversion * BPD Traits		1.46	.09	1.11	
Total R^2	.436				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 18

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting partner-rated neuroticism.

	Partner-Rated Neuroticism				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.150				.18
Perceived Actual Partner Neuroticism		9.42	.44	1.40	
Step 2	.000				.00
BPD Traits		-.20	-.01	1.18	
Step 3	.006				.01
Perceived Actual Partner Neuroticism * BPD Traits		1.59	.09	1.39	
Total R^2	.156				

Table 19

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting partner-rated extraversion.

	Partner-Rated Extraversion				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.316				.46
Perceived Actual Partner Extraversion		13.05	.61**	1.08	
Step 2	.041				.04
BPD Traits		-6.66	-.28	1.24	
Step 3	.027				.03
Perceived Actual Partner Extraversion * BPD Traits		-4.94	-.19	1.32	
Total R^2	.384				

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 20

Hierarchical regression analysis predicting partner-rated agreeableness.

	Partner-Rated Agreeableness				
	ΔR^2	b	β	*VIF*	f^2
Step 1	.307				.44
Perceived Actual Partner Agreeableness		8.39	.46*	1.14	
Step 2	.005				.01
BPD Traits		5.57	.26	1.38	
Step 3	.092				.10
Perceived Actual Partner Agreeableness * BPD Traits		-4.59	-.37	1.53	
Total R^2	.404				

Note. * = $p < .05$.

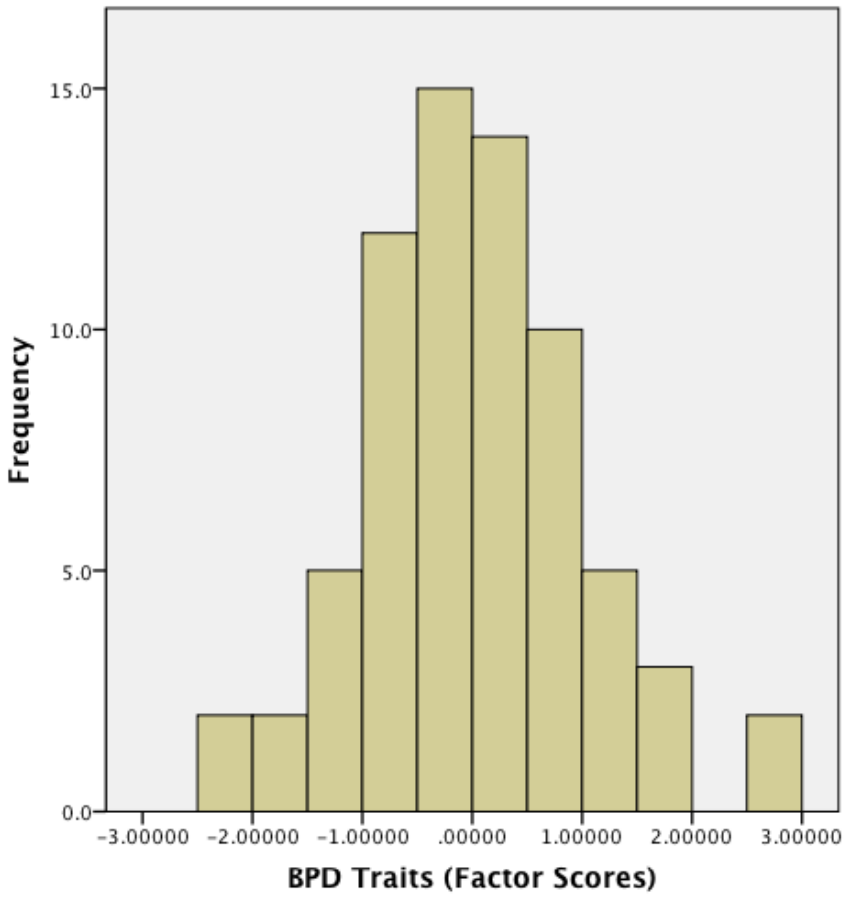

Figure 1. *Histogram displaying participant BPD trait factor scores.*

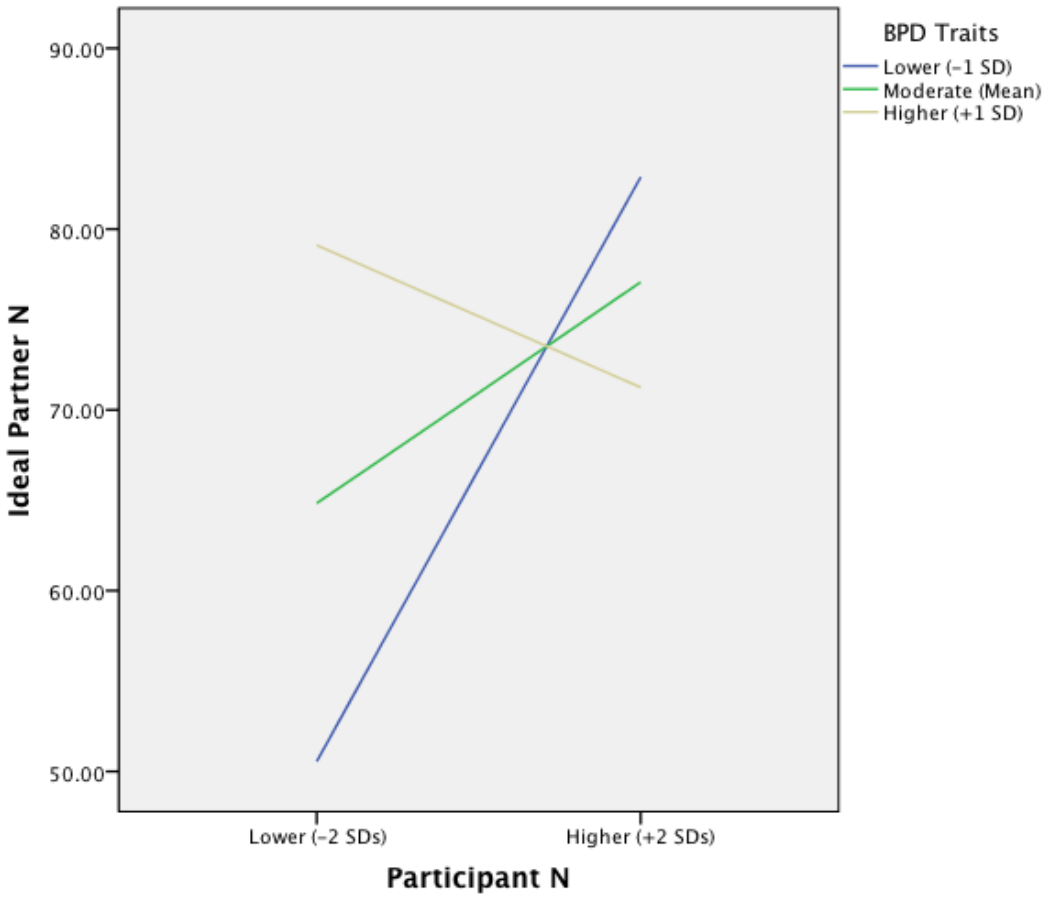

Figure 2. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between participant and ideal partner neuroticism.*

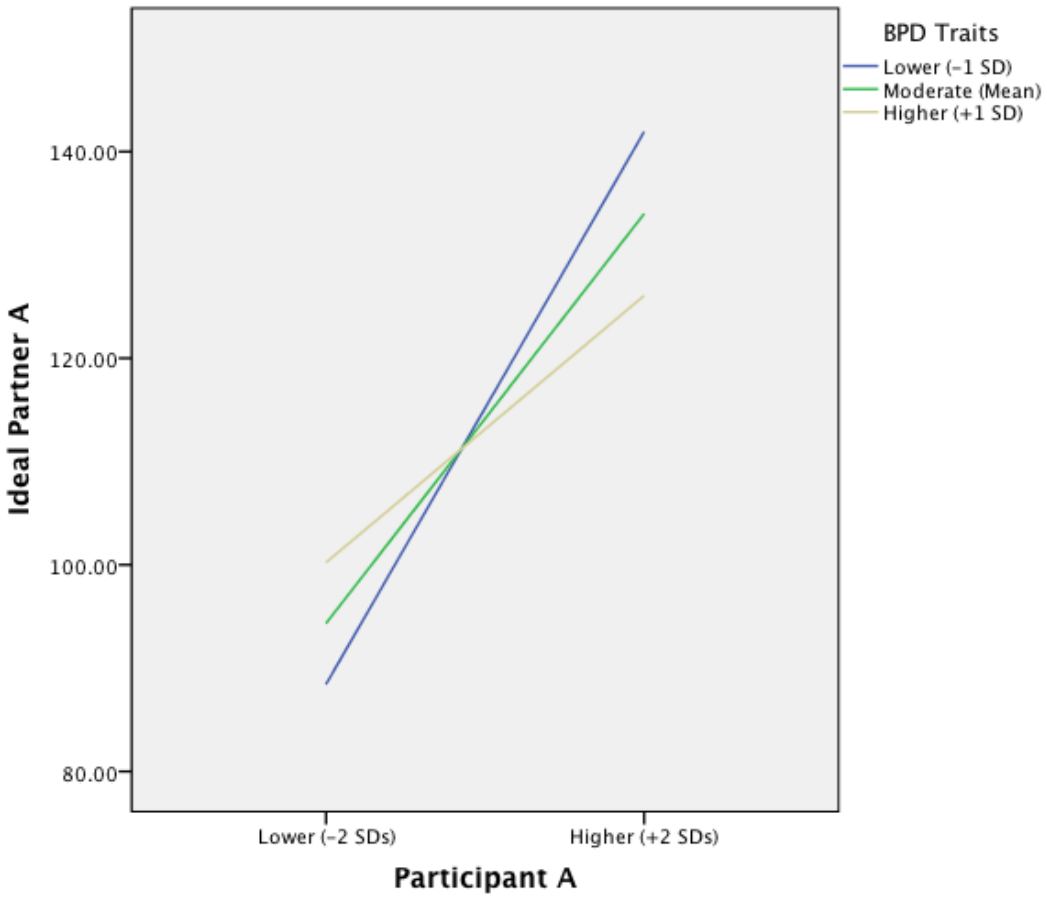

Figure 3. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between participant and ideal partner agreeableness.*

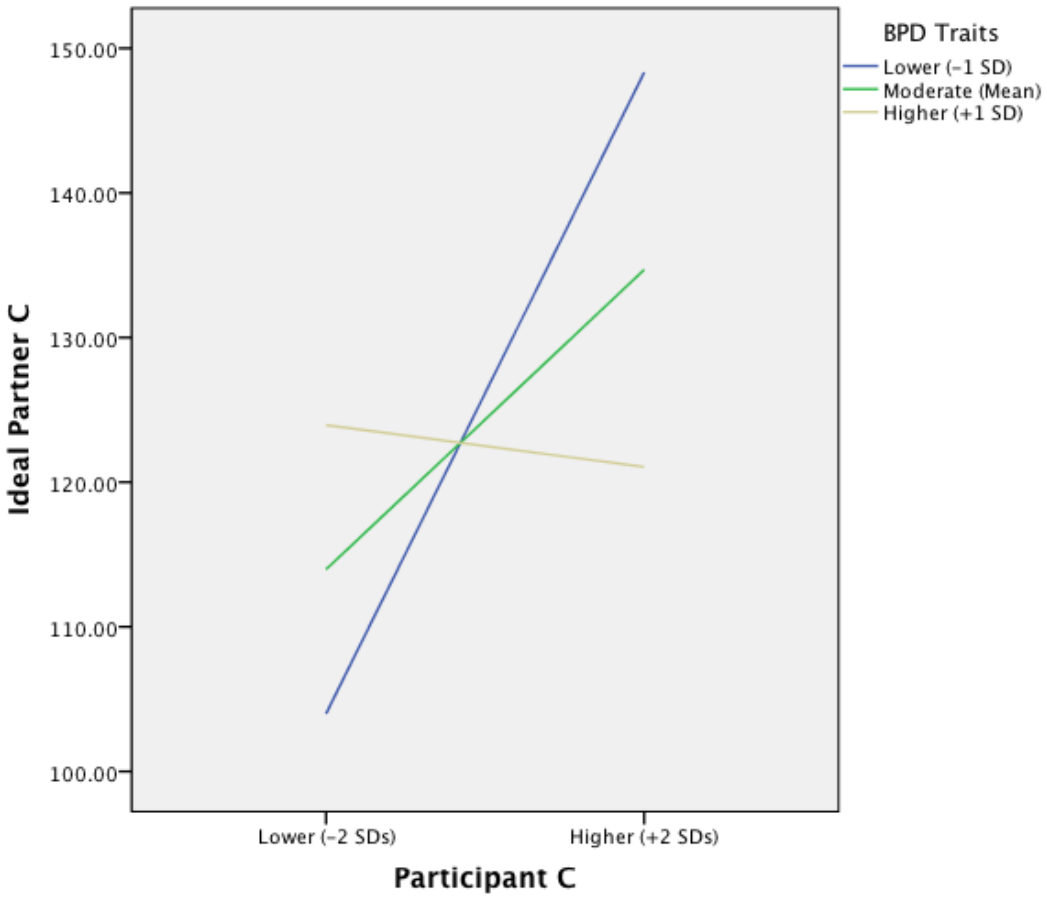

Figure 4. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between participant and ideal partner conscientiousness.*

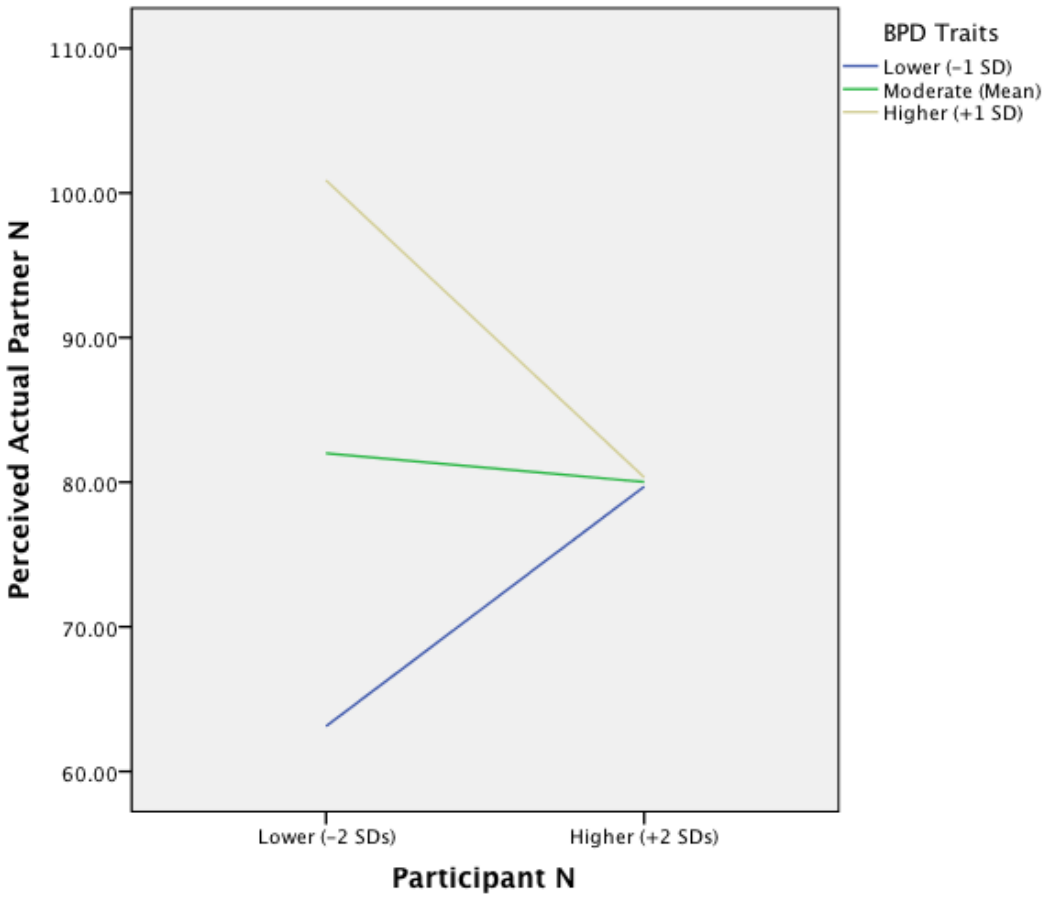

Figure 5. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between participant and perceived actual partner neuroticism.*

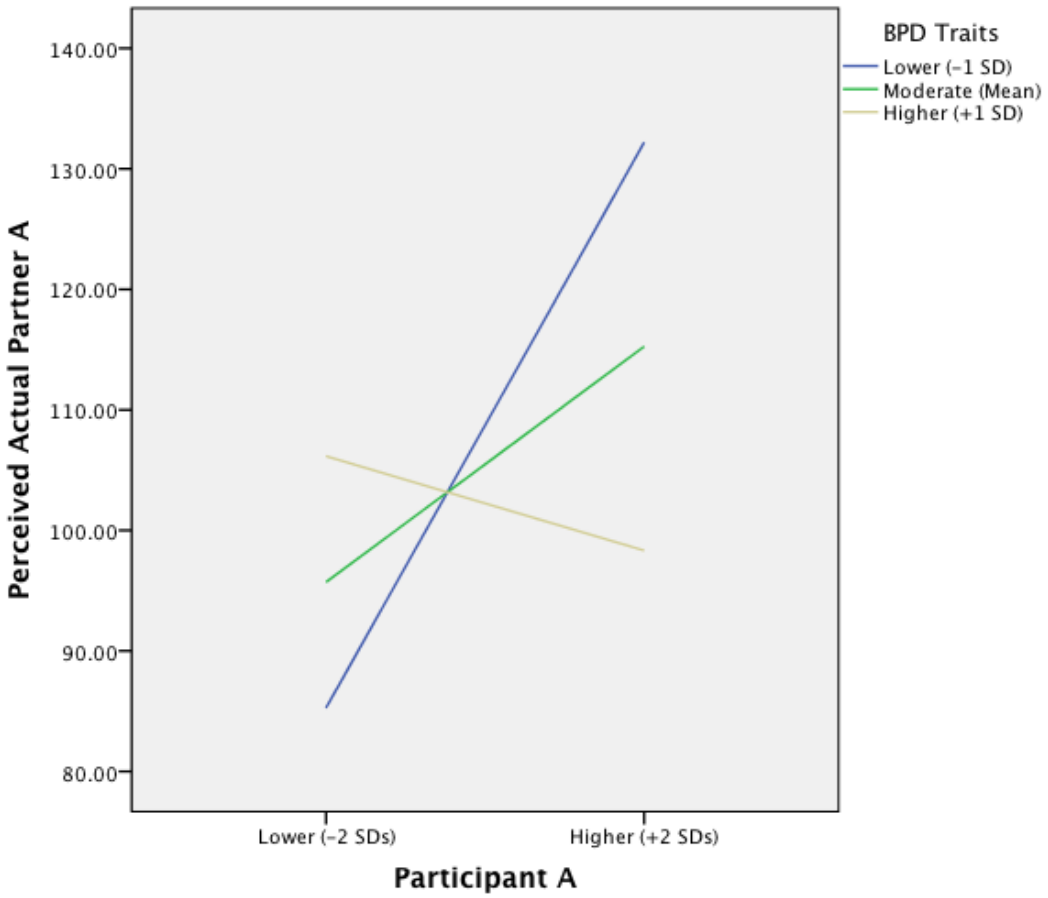

Figure 6. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between participant and perceived actual partner agreeableness.*

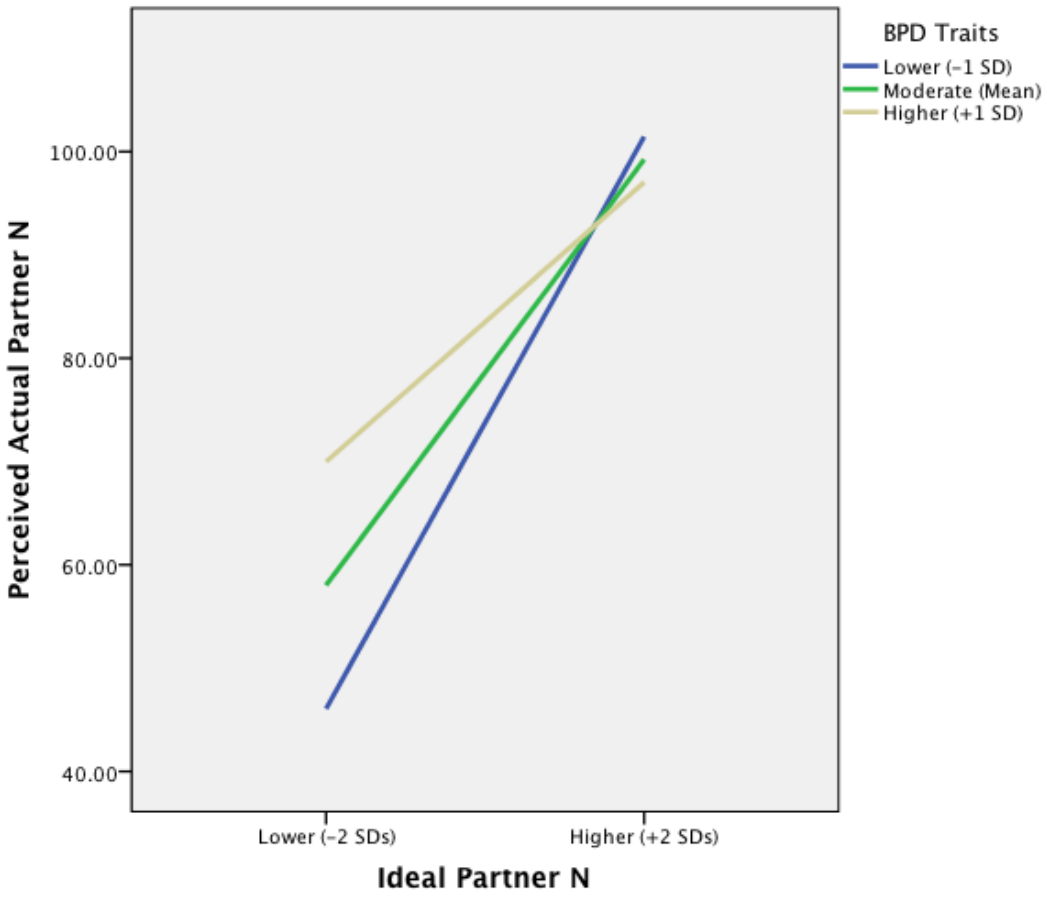

Figure 7. *Simple slopes analysis conducted to determine the effect of BPD traits, the moderator, on the nature of the relation between ideal and perceived actual partner neuroticism.*

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES

Relationship Questionnaire

1. How would you characterize your sexual orientation?

___ Heterosexual
___ Homosexual
___ Bisexual
___ Other

2. At what age did you first start dating?

3. Please estimate the number of romantic relationships that you have been in that have lasted more than one month.

4. Please estimate the number of sexual partners that you have had.

5. Please respond using the following scale:

___ I want a romantic partner who is very different from me in terms of personality
___ I want a romantic partner who is somewhat different from me in terms of personality
___ I want a romantic partner who is slightly different from me in terms of personality
___ I don't care
___ I want a romantic partner who is slightly similar to me in terms of personality
___ I want a romantic partner who is somewhat similar to me in terms of personality
___ I want a romantic partner who is very similar to me in terms of personality

6. How did you meet your current romantic partner? (may choose more than one)

___ High school
___ Lived in hometown, but did not attend same school
___ College
___ Live(d) near one another
___ Through mutual friend
___ Work(ed) together

___ Internet
___ Other

7. What initially attracted you to your current romantic partner? (may choose more than one)

___ Physical attractiveness
___ Political beliefs
___ Religious beliefs
___ Level of education
___ Socioeconomic status
___ He/she seemed similar to myself
___ He/she possessed traits/qualities that made up for my shortcomings
___ He/she lived/worked/socialized near me
___ I felt lonely
___ He/she showed interest in me
___ I felt the need to be in a relationship
___ Other

8. How satisfied are you in your current romantic relationship?

___ Very dissatisfied
___ Moderately dissatisfied
___ Slightly dissatisfied
___ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
___ Slightly satisfied
___ Moderately satisfied
___ Very satisfied